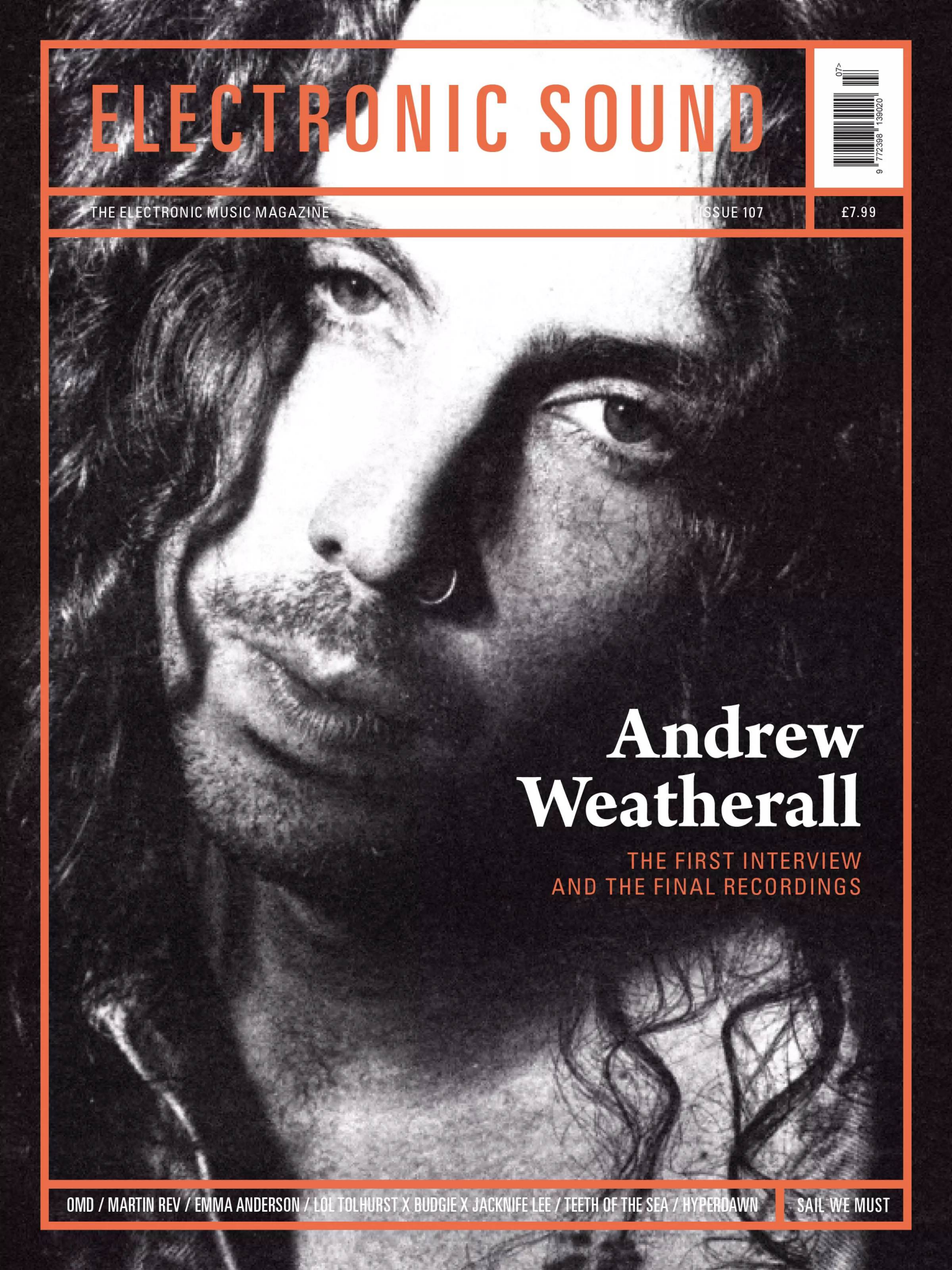
ELECTRONIC SOUND
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THE ELECTRONIC MUSIC MAGAZINE
ISSUE 107
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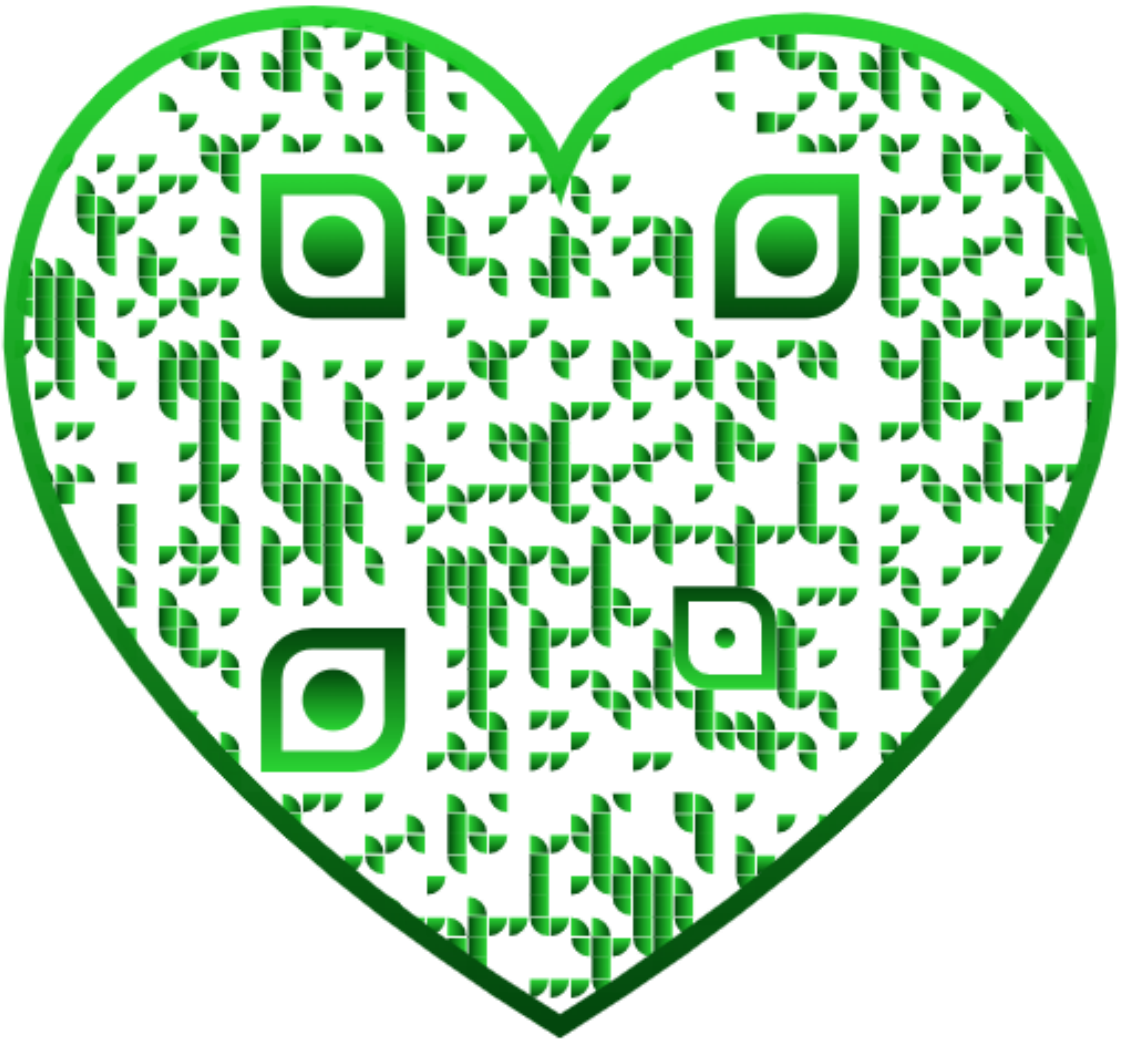
Andrew Weatherall
THE FIRST INTERVIEW
AND THE FINAL RECORDINGS
OMD / MARTIN REV / EMMA ANDERSON / LOL TOLHURST X BUDGIE X JACKNIFE LEE / TEETH OF THE SEA / HYPERDAWN
SAIL WE MUST



107

WELCOME TO ELECTRONIC SOUND

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It's almost four years since Andrew Weatherall died, robbing the electronic music world of one of its brightest, sharpest and most unique talents. It still feels strange to think that he's no longer with us. Thank goodness, then, for the huge volume of astonishing music he has left behind – classic remixes, countless collaborations, occasional solo releases and plenty more besides.

This month sees the release of 'Phonox Nights', an album Weatherall recorded with his long-time musical partner Nina Walsh in the year or so before his unexpected and untimely passing in February 2020. It's credited to the pair's Woodleigh Research Facility project and it's a superb record – weighty, edgy, acidic, minimal, warm, raw… select a track and take your pick. One of the many highlights is 'Gates To The South', which they completed on their final day in the studio. That was the last time Walsh saw Weatherall, who she had known since 1988, when they met at the seminal acid house club Shoom.

We've spoken to Walsh about 'Phonox Nights' for our cover story, which is something a bit different in that it's made up of four separate but interconnected features. These are snapshots of Weatherall during the early days and closing years of his career, focusing on his work as a remixer and a recording artist, rather than a definitive, all-encompassing, nuts-and-bolts history. The 'Phonox Nights' piece sits at the centre, but we're starting by reprinting the first interview Weatherall gave to the music press outside of his role as a member of Bocca Juniors. It was originally published in Melody Maker in 1991 and we have the photo that accompanied the MM article, which was taken by Stephen Sweet and hasn't been seen for 32 years, on the front of this month's magazine.

We also have some great contributions from three other people who collaborated with Weatherall – Bocca Juniors singer Anna Haigh, Jagz Kooner from The Sabres Of Paradise, and author Michael Smith, who hooked up with him when he was artist-in-residence at Faber Social – plus an extract from a forthcoming book about Walsh and Weatherall by Kris Needs. We're heading back to Shoom in 1988 for that, so get ready for a catalogue of drug-fuelled shenanigans, much of it directed by a man wearing a very large false nose.

With a sizeable chunk of the magazine devoted to Andrew Weatherall, it's a miracle we have room for anything else. But we do. Keep turning the pages and you'll find interviews with OMD, Martin Rev, Gavin Bryars, Emma Anderson, Teeth Of The Sea, Hyperdawn and Vic Mars. We also have a piece on a new project bringing together Lol Tolhurst (The Cure), Budgie (Siouxsie And The Banshees) and hotshot producer Jacknife Lee. And you can't go wrong with supergroups, can you? Well, not in this instance anyway.

Electronically yours,
Push and Mark

COVER PHOTO: STEPHEN SWEET

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BJÖRK & GOLDIE

Marc Ballroom, New York

17 NOVEMBER 1995

PICTURE: ALICE ARNOLD
INTERVIEW: ISAAK LEWIS-SMITH

"I moved to New York in 1990," says Alice Arnold. "I came from LA to build a career as a photographer and was interested in the music here. I thought it would be a good place to make images, and by 1995 I was working as the nightlife photographer for Paper Magazine. I was in my late 20s then.

"I was asked to photograph Goldie's 'Timeless' rave for a British mag called Eternity. It was my first and last job for them! I liked drum 'n' bass, and used to shoot a lot at Konkrete Jungle, New York's main club for that kind of music. Goldie wasn't that well-known here, but his 'Timeless' album had a big impact on the electronic scene.

"The rave was held at the Marc Ballroom on Union Square West, which is now a New York University dormitory. I'd never been before, so I really wasn't sure what to expect in terms of lighting and sightlines. When I arrived, DJ Soul Slinger was spinning and it wasn't that crowded, but I've since been told the fire department had raided the place moments before, forcing the art collective Byzar to take down their screen installations as a safety measure. I'm glad I missed that, as it must have put a chill on festivities!

"Goldie started spinning shortly after. The atmosphere was joyous, high-energy and the room suddenly got crowded and kinetic. I can remember standing right at the edge of the table where Goldie's records were, close to him, when Björk appeared at my side! It was an electrifying moment in the crowd – she's a magnetic presence.

"In this shot, Björk's head is turned towards me, maybe because of the flash that had just gone off from my previous shot. She's greeting Goldie with a rap on his ear. Normski is nearby on the mic, and in the background you can see Lady Miss Kier [Deee-Lite] pointing at them, and photographer Joseph Cultice with his point-and-shoot.

"I didn't have time to think. You just follow your training – focus, calculate the correct exposure, frame the image and press the shutter. I knew I had a good shot and stopped taking photos of them after two frames – it didn't feel right to intrude more on this personal moment and I'm not a paparazzi-style photographer!

"Some of that intrusive feeling still lingers with me, but I hope they appreciate it as a good memory. It shows Björk's playfulness, and this feels like a special moment between the two. I like to think it has a quiet power. I didn't see her again that night, but Goldie kept playing and took us all on a journey…"

'Goldie Timeless – Marc Ballroom NYC November 1995' is published by Café Royal Books. You can see more of Alice Arnold's work at a2studio.org

WHORE

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Woodleigh Research Facility
‘Yaldabaoth’ / ‘Milky Pond’
White vinyl seven-inch

Two sizzling slices of cosmic techno-funk from Woodleigh Research Facility, Andrew Weatherall and Nina Walsh’s left-field electronica project

This month’s cover star Andrew Weatherall created a vast collection of tracks in partnership with Nina Walsh, most recently as Woodleigh Research Facility, a name they started using in 2015. The pair’s friendship and working relationship stretched right back to the late 1980s and the early days of acid house.

The two tracks on our exclusive seven-inch, ‘Yaldabaoth’ and ‘Milky Pond’, were recorded in 2017 at Walsh’s Facility 4 studio in south London. They were included on Woodleigh Research Facility’s ‘Torschlusspanik’, a download collection that Walsh posted to the WRF Bandcamp page in April 2020, two months after Andrew Weatherall’s passing, but neither of them has been released in a physical format before.

“The download felt like a natural thing to do,” says Walsh. “Andrew had left us and people were recycling lots of his old stuff, but I thought, ‘I’ve got over 100 new tracks here, I should put some of them out’. I was in a very dark place, so it wasn’t at all easy. It took me every ounce of strength I had to compile the collection.”

Like WRF’s forthcoming new album, ‘Phonox Nights’, the sleeve notes for ‘Torschlusspanik’ were written by Weatherall and Walsh’s old friend Kris Needs. He describes the material as “top-notch cosmic techno-funk and space invader electro”, which sums up ‘Yaldabaoth’ and ‘Milky Pond’ pretty neatly.

“Yaldabaoth is a god in Gnosticism,” says Walsh of the slow and weighty A-side of the record, referring to the belief system that developed among early Christian sects. “He’s also known as the Son of Chaos, the God Eater and the Great Architect. He’s the demiurge of the Chaoverse and the main antagonist of the Gnostics. I probably shouldn’t really tell you this, but I used to make Andrew cringe and chuckle in equal measures by combining body popping with singing Yes’ ‘Owner Of A Lonely Heart’ to this track.”

The fizzing and bubbling ‘Milky Pond’ on the flip, meanwhile, was inspired by Weatherall’s favourite backflow incense burner.

“When it burned, it filled up like a milky pond,” notes Walsh. “There was a strong element of ritual to a lot of what Andrew did and he would always light it to initiate each new ceremony at the studio. He used to have it next to him in the programming room. He was known for having a burner in the clubs too and people would bring him gifts of incense. There was this one guy in particular, a poet, who he often talked about. This guy would come up and deliver a poem and a packet of incense to Andrew when he DJed.”

The two tracks on the seven-inch were originally known as ‘YAT-WAT05’ and ‘YAT-WAT10’, the titles demonstrating the big part that humour played in Weatherall and Walsh’s approach to making music.

“We were always eager to crack on in the studio. Having to decide what to call tracks was a bit of a chore.”

As a result, the pair came up with a series of impressively juvenile working titles for the WRF recordings – ‘Yadik’, ‘Yanob’ and ‘Yatool’ as well as the ‘Yat-Wat’ cuts – which they housed in folders with similarly daft names, including ‘Bum Dungeon’, ‘Oompty Boompty’ and ‘Krauty’. They still live on Nina Walsh’s computer to this day.

“We called the older folders ‘Ferrets’,” she says. “That was because Andrew would be ferreting around in the hard drives to get the sounds he wanted. He’d start the day with a coffee, then he’d light some incense and unleash the ferrets.”

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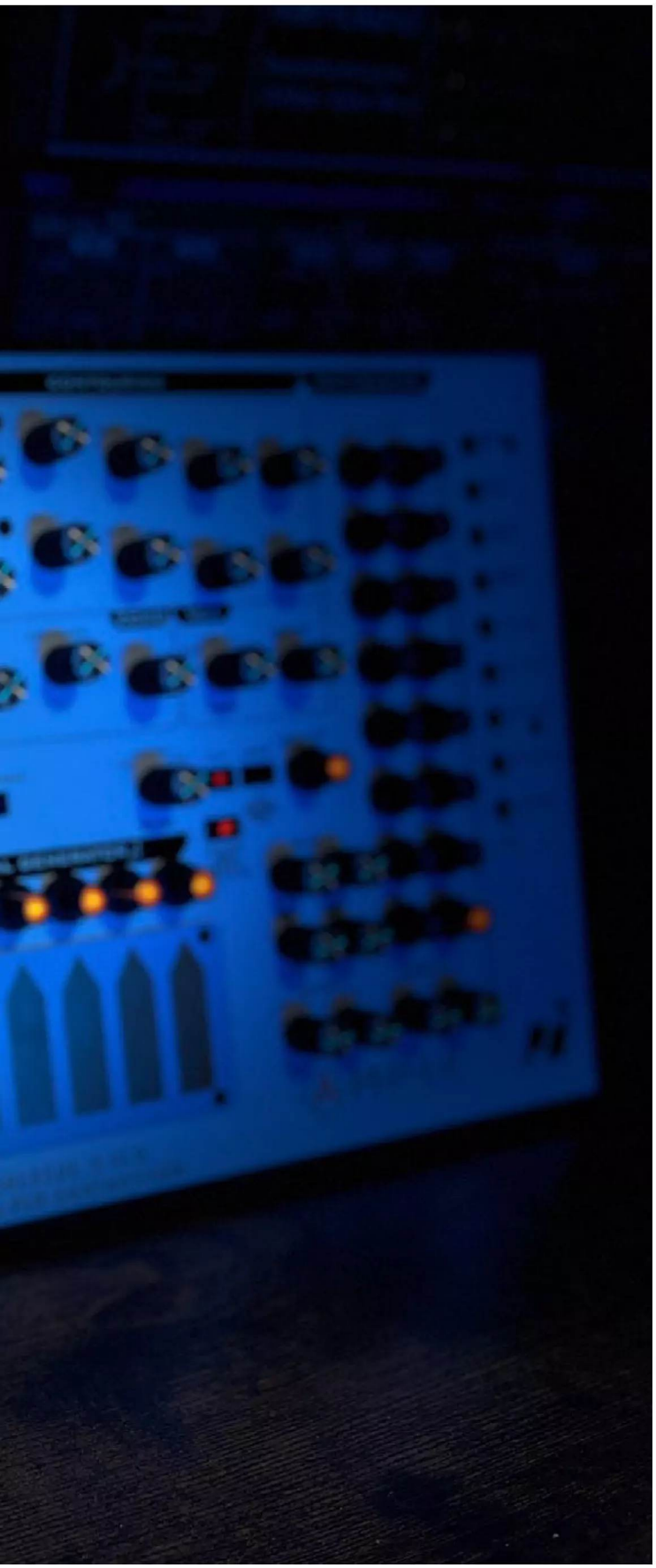
WHITE LIGHTNING

Dazzling desktop synth from Oxford tech wizards

Analogue Solutions have brought us some impressive machines in recent years, such as the uber-suave Maximus polysynth or the jaw-dropping ARP 2500/Synthi 100-inspired Colossus. Last month, they announced another game-changing synth called the Ample. And ample it is. A patch pin matrix synth boasting all-analogue architecture (with the exception of its MIDI input), it's a beautiful Frankenstein combining several of the company's discontinued models, like the Dr Strangelove ring modulator and the Fusebox monosynth. Analogue Solutions have boldly crowned it "the best desktop synth of all". Not bad for £1,999. **analoguesolutions.com**



PULSE

AMOR MUERE

Meet Mexican “experimental supergroup”

WHO?

Mabe Fratti, Camille Mandoki, Concepción Huerta and Gibrana Cervantes. These are the members who make up Amor Muere, a Mexico City quartet looking to push boundaries through immersive, near-transcendent sonic experiences with an eerie but electrifying brand of electronic experimentalism. After meeting four years ago at a multidisciplinary performance organised by Mandoki, they reportedly struck up a friendship right then and there. As such, much of their material is built around genuine emotional connection and unfiltered self-expression.

WHY AMOR MUERE?

When they formed, each musician was already respected in their own right, and the music overtly focuses on the individual talents of its members. Which is why they like to call themselves an “experimental supergroup”. Huerta’s subtle synthesisers and clever tape manipulation reacts with Fratti’s potent cello to form the music’s dark, sultry underbelly. Mandoki brings a unique vocal style imbued with such smoky intensity that she sounds like a woman possessed, while Cervantes contributes mournful violin parts that weave through the delicate spaces in between.

TELL US MORE...

After a number of years spent touring Mexico, the group’s highly anticipated debut album, ‘A Time To Love, A Time To Die’, has finally arrived. The lead single, ‘Love Dies’ (which is also the English translation of the group’s name), could quite easily soundtrack the climactic scene in an indie horror film. Think: the moment the main character realises they probably should have listened to the advice they were given and stayed well clear of that forbidding, ramshackle house they’re now creeping around. Its well-placed, knock-knock rhythms and queasy unease certainly whet the appetite for further releases from this talented foursome. Pushing boundaries? Pah! Amor Muere demolish them.

IMOGEN BEBB

‘A Time To Love, A Time To Die’ is out now on Scrawl

BANGING ON

More random musings from **Fat Roland**. On his mind this month (as far as we can tell) is '**Big Brother**'

"Big Brother". For us cultured types, this is a term from the book 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' by George Michael. It's set in Room 101, which is in Club Tropicana. "Big Brother" is always listening because Careless Whispers cost lives… something like that. I've never read a book.

For uncultured idiots unlike what I am, 'Big Brother' is a reality TV show that's inexplicably screening a 20th series. It streams for a million hours and consists mostly of people farting in bed. I feel I'm sullying the pages of Electronic Sound by writing about it. But statistically, there must be some people reading this page who watch 'Big Brother'. You know who you are. Yes you, Wilbur, who only ever reads the Front section and the reviews. I'm talking about you.

I'm not usually a fan of reality television. Why would I watch real people dancing or baking or snogging on the telly? I can break into any of my neighbours' houses and see that in real life. Bertrand at number 17 can do the splits while tossing a paella. Margarine at number 30 has a troupe of dancing wasps that will only jive to Huey Lewis. I'd much rather stalk, er, be entertained by folks in my hood than watch vajazzled himbos arguing over a jacuzzi on the small screen.

There's also an excruciating level of… what's the word? Homosexuality? Holograms? Homogeneity! Yes, that's the word. Cultural homogeneity. Let me explain. My personal world is rich with sonic oddities. I went to a concert once in which a geek blew out candles, then sampled the resulting crackles and flickers until they looped into an imperceptible soundscape of obtuse ambience. It was probably terrible. But it was my kind of terrible.

At least it's not Bruno-flipping-Mars or George-chuffing-Ezra. Mass-market mainstream entertainment mollifies everything into one bland Blu Tack ball of blandness. Candle samplers and waveform botherers are always going to lose out in the reality TV popularity stakes. But I'd rather see something obscure and inspiring than watch a bunch of celebrity jungle lurkers mass-murdering insects to win a potato.

Maybe an electronic music version of 'Big Brother' would work. Like Fact Magazine's 'Against The Clock' series, but instead of making a tune within 10 minutes, you must compose an acid house album while wrestling a bear. Or you solve riddles posed by Brian Eno to stop a bulldozer crushing your collection of Ninja Tune rarities into vinyl dust.

Or you could have 20 people in robot helmets, and they have to work out which ones are the real members of Daft Punk. The loser has to listen to 'Get Lucky' every hour for the rest of their lives. Stick that on yer tellybox and be done with it.

WAVE MACHINE

Paddle boarding? How about e-surfing?

Smash open the piggy bank and then some for the Fliteboard, a nifty piece of tech which lets you float across water on an electric surfboard. Made out of carbon fibre, and designed for any skill level, the aim of this device is supposedly "to turn rivers, lakes and oceans into your playground". Its "virtual gears system" even has options for cruise control, as well as speedier paces. Prices start at a cool £7,778. **eu.fliteboard.com**

REVOLVING DAWS

Brand new pod for music makers

OpenDAW Talks is a podcast for industry-minded producers, singers and songwriters which promises to be a comprehensive field guide to navigating the multifaceted and tricky world of the big scary music biz. With its name playing on the acronym for Digital Audio Workstation, the first series sees producer and DJ Lex Luca (not to be confused with Superman's nemesis) play host to a different guest, each bringing their own insight when it comes to creative strategising, the art of collaboration, maintaining good mental health and much more. Guests so far include Felix Buxton of Basement Jaxx, Deadmau5 collaborator Camden Cox, and Daft Punk/Gorillaz remixer Junior Sanchez, with plenty more to come. **opendawtalks.com**

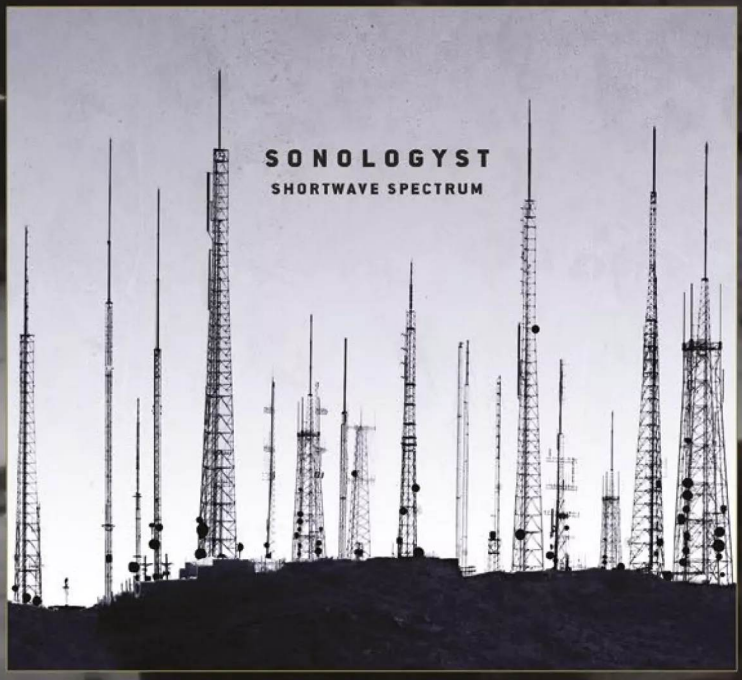
FELIX BUXTON

MERZBOW 'CAFE OTO' 2CD

A documentation of prolific Japanese noise master Merzbow's double show at London's Cafe OTO in October 2016. Rhythm-driven and rammed with highly sculpted frequencies, Akita's sound is entirely remorseless. Furious squalls and delicate sine-warps post this one on the more psychedelic end of Akita's output. Truly relentless! Be careful with that volume...
DCD in matt ecopak with photography by Masami Akita.
"An intense and constant sonic attack" (Irregular Notes On Music)

THE TELESCOPES 'EXPERIMENTAL HEALTH' CD

Created entirely independently by Stephen Lawrie in a remote cottage in West Yorkshire, this is a record made with broken toys and cheap synths, with a substantial amount of crushing and sound degradation. The result is an album radiating a dark and abrasive, yet ethereal energy. Included are bonus remixes by two divergent interpretations: Black Market Karma spreading a magnetic warmth and charm; and Mosaic Runes drawing out the cryptic spectres haunting the record, infusing tracks with fractured ice.



SONOLOGYST 'SHORTWAVE SPECTRUM' 2CD

A "sonic documentary" delving into the secretive realm of ever-active shortwave transmissions, unveiling a hidden sonic landscape of strategic communication. Mysterious repetitive voices, signals, and sound pulses, originating from covert radio stations, were collated and edited to compose CD1; immersed in an isolating fog of dark ambient, deep drone music and cinematic sound art. CD2 provides a deeper immersion into these enigmatic broadcasts; each recording unaltered, accompanied only by a ghostly drone.

OLEG KARPACHEV 'SPUTNIK' O.S.T. CD

Released for the first time on any format, we proudly present the soundtrack to the 2020 sci-fi horror film 'Sputnik' (Dir. Egor Abramenko). The bleak and hauntingly atmospheric film is accompanied by an impressively heavy soundtrack from Oleg Karpachev, who uses bombastic percussion, stirring strings, and otherworldly synths to convey the horror unfolding on screen. File next to: Steven Price, Hans Zimmer, Ben Frost, In Slaughter Natives...

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RISE AND SHINE

Paraorchestra conductor **Charles Hazlewood** and electronicist **Surgeons Girl** talk about 'Trip The Light Fantastic', the daring electro-classical collaboration they're debuting this month

WORDS: JONATHAN WRIGHT

Bristol's Hotel Du Vin has just received a jolt of bohemian energy – Charles Hazlewood and Sinead McMillan are in the building.

As leader of Paraorchestra – a classical ensemble featuring around 40 disabled and non-disabled musicians – Hazlewood is a man of restless energy, constantly pacing and vaping. McMillan, aka electronic producer Surgeons Girl, is a quieter presence, but she has a razor-sharp sense of humour. We are also joined by her boisterous dog OB, named after the Oberheim synth, who adds to the sense of mildly out-of-control jollity.

We're here to discuss 'Trip The Light Fantastic', a new electro-orchestral audiovisual piece commissioned to express the idea of moving from darkness to light, to be performed at Bristol Beacon. The title's origins derive from John Milton's 1645 poem, 'L'Allegro'.

"His words are the embodiment of a new way – of free speech, of democracy and kindness to all humanity," says Hazlewood. "The resonances are very strong."

The "resonances" Hazlewood refers to are especially sensitive in this situation, given that the Bristol Beacon is the rebranded Colston Hall. With the venue previously named after the slave trader Edward Colston, whose Victorian-era statue was toppled and tipped into Bristol Harbour in June 2020, it has undergone a multimillion pound facelift. Hazlewood says it's now "a world-class space", but the symbolic renaming of Bristol's largest concert hall also signals a kind of reset.

Viewed in this context, 'Trip The Light Fantastic' provides the first opportunity to redefine and bring new life to the space. And who better for the job than Hazlewood – who self-effacingly calls himself a "tired old conductor" after touring for 30 years – and McMillan, who he approached because she's "in a lane of her own". Their contrasting energies have clearly clicked.

SURGEONS GIRL REHEARSING WITH PARAORCHESTRA – PHOTO: PAUL BLAKEMORE

CHARLES HAZLEWOOD CONDUCTING 'KRAFTWERK RE:WERK' – PHOTO: GUY PETERSON

REHEARSALS FOR 'TRIP THE LIGHT FANTASTIC' – PHOTO: PAUL BLAKEMORE

"To begin with, Charles was surprised by my lackadaisical nature," says McMillan, whose wide-ranging work encompasses both techno and ambient. "I tend not to get over-excited about things. I was like, 'Yeah, this could be really interesting', but I was also worried that I wouldn't do a good job. It was a big prospect."

Paraorchestra, of course, have form for this kind of thing. They have performed Philip Glass' 'Heroes' symphony on the main stage at Glastonbury, re-"werked" 'Trans-Europe Express', and in 2022 collaborated with Hannah Peel on 'The Unfolding', a staggering electro-classical album which integrated electronica into orchestral pieces rather than "Sellotaping on some beats", to use Hazlewood's analogy.

The process for 'Trip The Light Fantastic' began with McMillan writing "little bits" of music. She believes her solo work naturally has "a melancholic quality" to it, but also moments of hopefulness and colour that chime with the theme of channelling darkness into light. Indeed, many of the textures she came up with in the early days of the project sounded orchestral, thanks to her analogue Vermona PERfourMER synth which she describes as being "quite brassy".

Conventionally, McMillan would have worked towards presenting Paraorchestra with a complete, finished piece. Instead, this was only the beginning of a phase the pair refer to as research and development.

"We believe that by doing a range of R&D on a new project, you're testing ideas, testing parameters," says Hazlewood.

It was also a way for the composer to write for specific musicians in Paraorchestra, whose members Hazlewood calls "a very bespoke bunch of individuals". McMillan says she only fully appreciated this when she learned first-hand what different players brought to the table.

"I want there to be moments of noise and then beautiful melodic moments," she says. "There's one piece at the end that's the showstopper – it's almost like a symphonic finale."

'Trip The Light Fantastic' will include state-of-the-art visuals from multimedia design studio Limbic Cinema.

"There's a synergy between us and Paraorchestra in the way they produce their work," says Thom Buttery, Limbic Cinema's creative director and co-founder. "They're experimenting – they know what the rules are, but they're willing to break those down to find new ways to communicate with audiences."

Ultimately, 'Trip The Light Fantastic' will depend on all these elements coming together, and all the signs are positive.

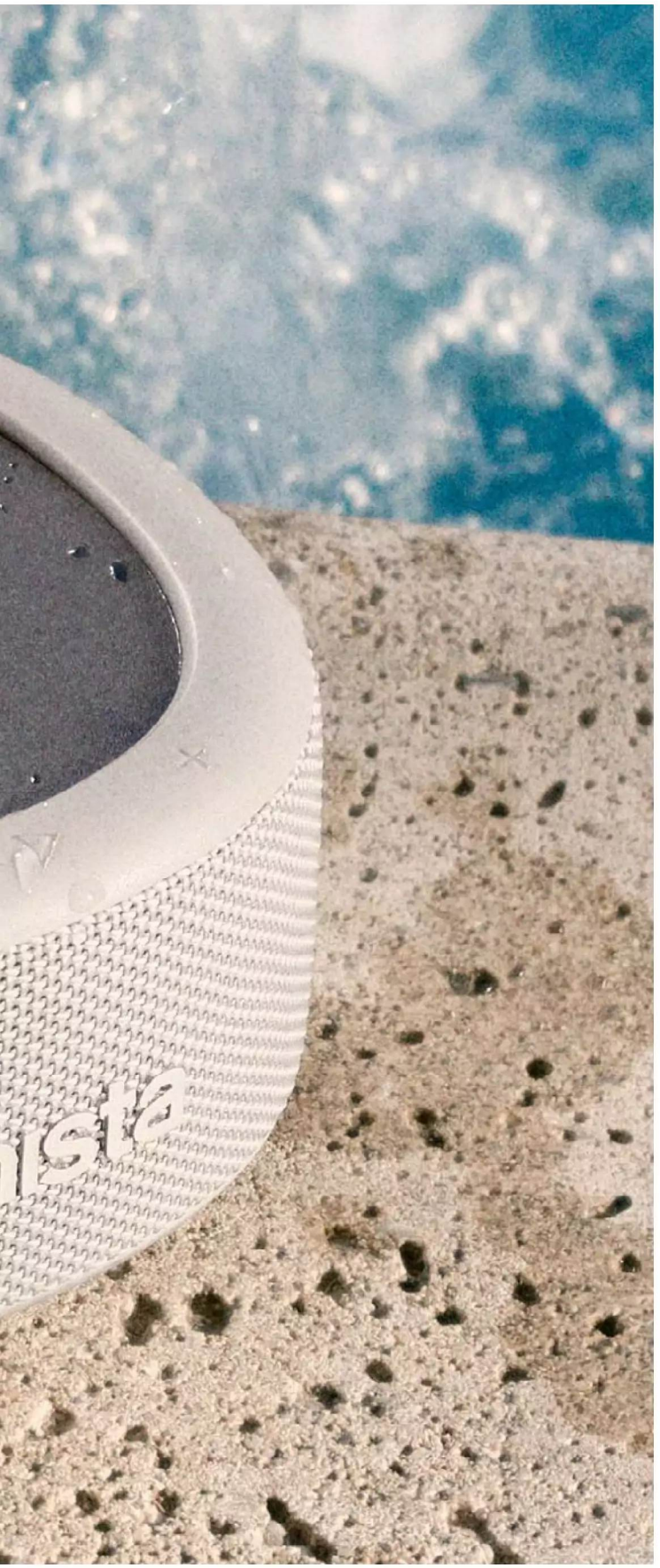
"It has forced me to think differently," says McMillan of her work with Paraorchestra. "I can just be more out-there."

'Trip The Light Fantastic' will debut with two performances at Bristol Beacon on 30 November

EVERYBODY LOVES THE SUNSHINE

The solar-loving sound you need

In the market for a new Bluetooth speaker? You might want to have a gander at the Malibu from Urbanista. As well as being the world's first solar-charging wireless speaker with integrated Powerfoyle™ solar cell technology, it's also water, sand, dust and dirt-proof, so it's suited and booted for heavy use. Its power source isn't the only sustainable feature, by the way, with the Malibu being made from recycled materials. If it's even half as good as the Stockholm company's impressive Los Angeles solar-powered headphones, then we're in for a treat. No price yet, but get your name on the waiting list pronto. **urbanista.com**



PULSE

AMPS KILL

Big noise to get your neighbours knocking

WHO?

Amps Kill is the new post-industrial project from composer, improviser and audio engineer, Stephen Bailey. Based in Denver, Colorado, his creative mission is to reflect on our post-pandemic world with "nihilistic aggression", a move which has seen him swap the avant-garde chamber music of his previous group, Nebula Ensemble, for darker electro hues. See his recent single 'Torn And Scattered', which practically throbs with a mass of hyper-synthetic textures and foreboding drones.

WHY AMPS KILL?

Warning. If you're looking for sounds to transport you to a better place, this isn't the music for you. Take another single 'Rage/Decay', featuring a collapsing industrial tune stripped back to its rotten core, as a manipulated machine vocal describes the process of decaying bodies. We did warn you. But despite the gnarly aggression, it's not all sledgehammers. Bailey's interpretation of drone is far from one-dimensional, probably thanks to his classical training. His music is imbued with a deliberate subtlety, and he says every sound, with the exception of voice, was made using a digital synth. "Even the drums," he adds. "I'm too poor for analogue synths, too lazy for sampling and too introverted to start another band."

TELL US MORE...

Bailey's music often entwines with a central theme he is musing on. 'Piles Of Flesh' explores the US Supreme Court overturning a ruling for women to make medical choices about their bodies, which takes a "disturbing, misogynistic viewpoint that women are either mothers or whores", he claims. And released last month, 'The Sting Of Ash And Oil' is a violent feast of elemental noise ready to turn you inside out. Indeed, if you want catharsis through noise, dive right in.

JAMES THORNHILL

'The Sting Of Ash And Oil' is out now via Bandcamp

PULSE

ATKA

Pop polymath deals a debut doozy

WHO?

Brandenburg-born Atka may be new on the scene, but her unique form of emotive electronic art-pop feels like the work of a time-worn veteran. Released this month, her debut EP 'The Eye Against The Ashen Sky' is replete with modular and analogue synths, bold sound design and guitars. In fact, it was written while Atka, who is now living in London, was completing her Master's in philosophy, (focusing on French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of "the gaze"). Add to that her formative influences of Joy Division and Kraftwerk and you're in the right ballpark.

WHY ATKA?

If you like weighty philosophy delivered with aplomb then you need look no further. 'Desiring Machines' is the first single from her EP and refers to the books 'Anti-Oedipus' and 'A Thousand Plateaus' by French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, each of which explores how the body is experienced as an object through the male gaze. Atka says she is particularly preoccupied with Deleuze and Guattari's idea of "the rhizome" – a network of multiplicities which has no centre and which doesn't start from or end anywhere, but grows from everywhere simultaneously.

TELL US MORE...

Still with me? Good. Atka's music's weighty worldliness is partly hewn from her own travels and life experience. Having grown up in a tiny German village, she moved to Australia's Gold Coast as a teenager, then to the mountains of Squamish, Canada, before eventually settling in the UK. Something of a polymath, she once had her sights set on a career in sustainability research and politics before pivoting into filmmaking and directing several shorts. Atka then made her way back to music, first as a journalist, penning pieces for Rolling Stone, Groove, Musikexpress and others. Only now is she finally launching into the bona fide artist life. And trust me – we're all the better for it.

WILLIAM STOKES

'The Eye Against The Ashen Sky' is out now via Bandcamp

NEEDS MUST

Freewheeling through time and space, **Kris Needs** continues his adventures in sound. This month: Donna Summer's **'Once Upon A Time'**

SECRET KNOWLEDGE

Last month was pretty monumental as Wonder, my partner in Secret Knowledge, flew over from the US and laid down some killer tracks with Nina Walsh at Facility 5. Inevitably it evoked memories of 30 years ago, when we were on the Sabres Of Paradise label she ran with Mr Weatherall and 'Sugar Daddy' was ripping up the clubs.

As our song had been inspired by Giorgio Moroder's groundbreaking Donna Summer productions, it got me remembering even further back to 1977 when I'd spend long nights laying out ZigZag, the UK's first serious music monthly, by hand. It was the height of punk, but my soundtrack was often Chic and Donna Summer as it was the golden age of disco, and this was where the real innovations were happening.

That year's 'Once Upon A Time' took the continuous DJ-friendly track segueing pioneered by Gloria Gaynor two years earlier and applied it to Donna's third concept work – a "disco opera" around the Cinderella story – on the genre's first double album. In 1977, it was genuinely startling to hear Giorgio Moroder and Pete Bellotte's electronic beats and sequencers driving the disco express – notably the techno-presaging 'Working The Midnight Shift' and 'Faster And Faster To Nowhere' – and sending that magical voice over juddering pulsescapes that predated acid house by nearly a decade.

In November 1991, I realised a personal ambition by interviewing Donna for Echoes, and I took Wonder along to meet one of the last great divas. She was lovely, and unsurprisingly the two ladies clicked uproariously, particularly after Wonder told Donna she'd been inspired to follow her in settling in Munich during the 1980s. My day was made when Donna said we looked like we shared the same hairdresser and called me "a naughty boy" for thrusting forth my 'Love To Love You Baby' LP to be signed. She seemed genuinely surprised when I raved about 'Once Upon A Time' as an electronic game-changer.

"They play that album? That's hysterical!" she guffawed. "I can't imagine anyone playing that! I would have marked 'I Feel Love' as the absolute beginning of the techno thing. You just go, 'Wow!'. When I heard it for the first time, I was spellbound. You don't know when you do something what it will become down the line."

Meanwhile, closer to home, another somewhat seismic album is finally being unleashed this month – Woodleigh Research Facility's 'Phonox Nights'. Wallow in it!

X MARKS THE PEDWALK

SUPERSTITION

"Superstition" is an immersive exploration of deepest desires and feelings and does not shy away from the somber reality of despair and mortality. Dive into the depths of human experience, the fragility of life, our vulnerability and complexity of human connection. All is shaping our individual perceptions and that makes each of us extraordinary and unique.

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INVADA

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As the inaugural release on Brian Eno's Obscure imprint, '**The Sinking Of The Titanic**' has inspired generations of artists and listeners alike. Yorkshire composer **Gavin Bryars** reveals how he penned, or rather, "put together" this iconic composition

INTERVIEW: WILLIAM STOKES

"'The Sinking Of The Titanic' is one of the earliest things I did. It's certainly the earliest piece that I actually keep in my catalogue. I was a full-time jazz and improvising music-player until the mid-1960s and was feeling my way through. I'd been working with John Cage in America, so I was getting into that world of experimental music… but in actuality, I'd done very little.

"Right through the 1970s, I and my friends and colleagues in England were seen as almost unemployable in music departments, universities and conservatoires. We were sort of 'dangerous'. How we went about things was not 'musical' in the way people understood it. But the places that did employ us were the art colleges. That was a sympathetic environment.

"Quite a number of us working in the area of experimental music were using found music, found objects – rather like in the fine arts, with Marcel Duchamp and the 'readymades' – finding things to insert into an art context which you may modify to some extent or simply leave alone.

"With 'Titanic', I composed virtually nothing. I just put it together. The Latin verb componere means 'putting things together'. It's what composing means – not in the way musicians understand it, more in the way that a fine artist might, which is hard to define, and less commercial.

"In 1969, the initial idea for the piece was as a kind of audible conceptual art. It was first realised in December 1972 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Then it changed from time to time, because I was often finding new things.

"To begin with, there was extensive, very detailed and very precise research. I interviewed survivors, I spent time looking at the border trade report into the crash. I had diagrams of the ship and all sorts of nautical routes. I had the booklet that was given to all the first and second-class passengers about the ship and its facilities. I knew the complete passenger list. I knew the names of each musician of the string sextet, what instrument they played, where they were from and where their cabins were.

"When I was working on it, of course, the Titanic wreck hadn't been discovered yet. It was a sort of mythic object at the bottom of the North Atlantic, somewhere about 500 miles off the Newfoundland coast. And that's all we knew. We knew roughly when it went down. I had transcripts of all the radio signals, the morse signals between the various ships that were around… all those kinds of conversations. And then the critical question that started the whole thing off was, 'What did the string players actually play?'. So the research took me quite deeply into that territory.

"There is a very reliable witness – the second wireless operator – who was actually in the water with a lifebelt around him, only 150 feet away from the ship. Obviously, he was concerned about getting dragged under by the suction, but in fact the ship slipped very gently under the water. He said the musicians were still playing and that they didn't stop. 'How they did it, I can't imagine,' he said.

"So that led me to this idea of the actual music moving under the water. The metaphor being that the musicians go, and with them goes the music, and the music continues… in this sort of metaphorical way.

"I dealt with questions as they arose. Sometimes they were conceptual or speculations which could get more and more absurd. But I followed them to their logical conclusions, which led me to some really crazy cul-de-sacs! Sometimes there were technical questions. For example, one of the things I did for the first performance was to work out what would happen to music underwater, if it could be played.

"I had a friend who worked at the physics department at Cardiff University in 1972. I went over there with tapes of the string group playing the music, and we made calculations about the degree of delay, of reflection and equalisation, all kinds of things that would happen as you descend. We made a sort of backing tape which lasted the length of the performance, where the music evolved into this increasingly murky state by applying the little formulae that my physicist friend had devised. I'm sure they're laughingly inaccurate, but it's poetry.

"I performed it in this way from 1972 through to the end of the 70s, including the recording for Brian Eno's Obscure record label, and then I didn't do it for a while. But later, I was persuaded to do a new performance for the Belgian label Les Disques Du Crépuscule, live in a water tower in central France. I was attracted to that for several reasons. One was the fact that it was a very strange kind of water environment in the middle of land. And secondly – more importantly – by then, the Titanic had been discovered.

"And there were details that changed – one thing, for example, was that a set of bagpipes was discovered on the seabed. So when I did the piece in France, I added a kind of bagpipe lament. It was quite a dramatic thing.

"One thing I got into with this was morse signals and the apparatus created by Guglielmo Marconi. When the rescue ship arrived in New York, apparently Marconi rushed up to embrace the sound engineer who reported it, because this was the first use of wireless telegraphy in ocean rescue. An hour-and-a-half after the ship sank, one ship heard the Titanic's call signal. The ship was under the water – it was no longer there, but the sound was there still.

"Towards the end of his life, Marconi had this rather mystical idea – that once sounds are uttered they don't disappear, they're just smothered by other sounds around them. There was this crazy mysticism about it. Ideas about strange, speculative things… the mystery of it. The magic."

A retrospective event is being held at the Barbican in London on 19 December in celebration of Gavin Bryars' 80th birthday. You can buy tickets at barbican.org.uk

IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE...

Christmas clobber is a must-have

'Tis almost the season (just admit it), and what better way to get into the festive spirit than with acid house-inspired knitwear. Paying tribute to the Roland TB-303, this jumper is covered in iconic smileys adorned with Christmas hats, with the bass synthesiser taking pride of place in the centre and "Season's Tweakings" emblazoned across the front. This is a properly knitted sweater by the way (none of that printed-on nonsense). Priced at £40, it's limited to 500 pieces. **jimll.co.uk**

ELECTRO FIESTA

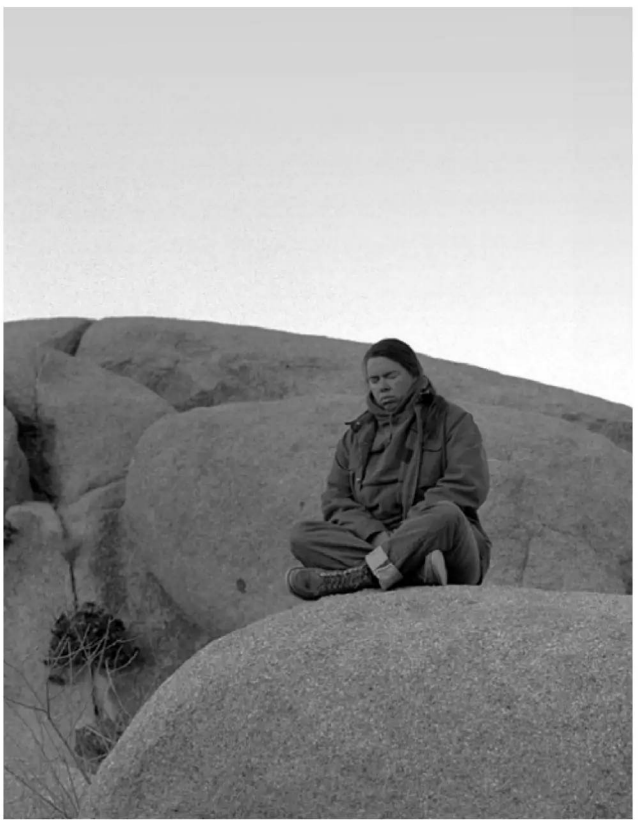
Show reveals Latin electronic music history

'LatAmTronica' is a new interactive exhibition chronicling the tapestried evolution of electronic music in Latin America. Developed in partnership with non-profit digital creative platform MUTEK, the project combines multimedia storytelling with archival material, including documentaries, music videos, and more to help you discover influential artists and scenes you might not have come across before. "We are part of a sound reality that has existed for decades but has not been claimed," reads the LatAmTronica manifesto. "We are the unheralded underbelly of Latin American culture." Head to their website to explore the free exhibition. **latamtronica.com**

LISTEN CAREFULLY

Cool doc shines a light on "deep listening" movement

Pauline Oliveros' unparalleled six-decade career is explored in a new documentary, 'Deep Listening: The Story Of Pauline Oliveros', which recently premiered at the Doc'n Roll Film Festival. Directed by Daniel Weintraub, this absorbing and often moving two-hour film charts Oliveros' fearless path. From Texas-born accordion player to feminist, lesbian, visionary composer, educator and thinker, she turned the electronic world upside down in San Francisco, San Diego and New York in the 1960s, and continued to innovate until her death in 2016. Moreover, she taught everyone she encountered, including John Cage, how to truly listen. Featuring contributions from Terry Riley, her partner Ione and long-time fan Thurston Moore, 'Deep Listening' shows that although Oliveros has been gone for seven years, we're still just catching up with her incredible body of work. **paulineoliveros.us**



FRONTAL STROBE

Google make music using brainwaves

Last month, it was announced that Google have been experimenting with a novel technology that seeks to turn brain scans into music. Five volunteers at Osaka University in Japan were played over 500 different tracks in 10 different musical styles while lying inside a functional MRI scanner. The resulting images were fed into an AI model, cryptically named Brain2Music, which then utilised Google's AI music generator, MusicLM, to create songs using those musical stimuli, paying attention to "semantic properties like genre, instrumentation and mood". The results are slightly scary, because scientists believe this could pave the way for a world where songwriters dream up melodies and AI-connected printers, hooked up to the auditory cortex, print the musical scores. **arxiv.org**

BUTTON MASHING

Gaming culture explored from 1953 to now

Did you know the annual revenue of the international video game industry is now worth over $200 billion – four times that of the global cinema box office? Mad really, especially when you consider this was a niche hobby not that long ago. Chronicling these cultural changes, and much more, is 'Game Changers: The Video Game Revolution', an enthralling visual history of the gaming industry published by Phaidon. Starting with the very first release in the mid-20th century and travelling all the way through to the present day, this fascinating tome looks at individual titles in alphabetical order, taking each one apart to show why it made waves. Featuring over 300 entries and more than 500 stunning illustrations, this is both coffee table eye-candy and an informative read you won't be able to put down. Get it in hardback today for just £39.95. **phaidon.com**

CODE BREAKER

Online vinyl collecting tool hits beta phase

Crate diggers might just have found a way to reckon with digital streaming platforms' music recommendation algorithms, and it goes by the name of Dig Assistant. Developed by data engineers at London label and artist collective Timehri Records, the website (or "sophisticated machine learning model", to use their terminology) allows users to plumb the depths of Discogs' seriously vast online catalogue.

The Dig Assistant manual instructs the user to paste the URL of a release into an online form, then to "click 'dive' to explore the wormhole further". A host of recommendations based on your listening will then be shown to you. Currently, the beta-phase website is limited to electronic vinyl – house, techno, electro, grime, UK garage, jungle and trance. Other releases might not be covered, but further expansion will be coming very soon. **digassistant.xyz**

Simon Kirby

At Rahoy, the early light

"A masterpiece of just intonation drone"

Available now on LP and all digital platforms

expertsleepersltd.bandcamp.com

On 'Baba Soirée', his new collaborative album with Michel Banabila, mechanical instrument maestro **Pierre Bastien** revels in unusual ways to manipulate the sound of his cornet. His influences are a steady diet of artistic rule-breakers... and tiny circuses

INTERVIEW: OLI WARWICK

INTERNATIONAL SITUATIONISM

"I read Raoul Vaneigem, the Belgian situationist, at an early age, and it very much influenced my way of thinking about the world. Situationism is not only about art, it's also about politics and has social aspects. The situationist filmmaker René Viénet took existing films and changed the dialogue so they became something completely different, making Chinese kung fu and Japanese erotic films into political statements.

"I don't know if I managed this process of détournement in my own work, but I tried. My 'Mecanology' installation takes everyday items and makes them into instruments – a toothbrush drumming and a teapot playing like a hi-hat. I think it acts as a sort of détournement. The ashtray does not help the smoker, but it plays percussion. On 'Baba Soirée', I mainly use the cornet but always transform the sound using my own kind of mutes which also add extra sounds or notes. I'm always trying to change the trumpet into something else."

THE ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO

"The first time I heard a concert by the Art Ensemble Of Chicago was in Paris in 1970, when I was 17 years old. It made a huge impression on me. They didn't have a drummer at that time. They were a quartet and were doing the percussion themselves. I have performed live with drummers, but in my recorded music, despite not being a percussionist, I've always played percussion myself or I've made machines to play the percussion so I could focus on other sounds.

"The Art Ensemble Of Chicago were probably the only free jazz band playing in other contexts like pop music festivals in Europe. They were a band that could play in different situations and interest pop music listeners. What they were doing was wider than free jazz, it was also an act. It had a lot of different aspects. I very much like not being stuck in any kind of musical movement, and playing music for any type of audience."

RAYMOND ROUSSEL

"When I was 19 years old, I read Raymond Roussel's book, 'Impressions Of Africa', where he describes his idea for a heat-sensitive, portable music machine in a glass box driven by gears. It's called the thermodynamic orchestra, and Roussel describes plenty of other fictional sound devices in this book and his other famous work, 'Locus Solus'. Although he studied at the Paris conservatory, he wasn't a professional musician – he was a millionaire who lived like an eccentric – but his beautiful descriptions of his devices were a huge inspiration to me.

"Roussel said his works are about imagination – there is very little psychology in them. I think there is also very little psychology in music. When you start playing music, especially your own, you are in another sphere which is made of pure imagination and, to me, Roussel made a literary equivalent of music. Many artists of the 20th century have been inspired by him without knowing it – they quote Marcel Duchamp as an inspiration and Duchamp was himself greatly inspired by Roussel."

ALEXANDER CALDER

"I love the transparency of Alexander Calder's work. I once saw 100 of his sculptures in a very large room in a museum in Chicago, and from one corner to the opposite corner, you could see everything. His sculptures are all so light, even if they are heavy in weight. They float in the space they inhabit, and I would like to reach that in my music.

"For me, Calder's best work is also his smallest. I love the simplicity and complexity of his little 'Cirque Calder', because everything works so wonderfully. At first, you wouldn't expect such movement from the tiny characters like the trapeze artist and the acrobat. I think Hornby's design of Meccano parts with holes everywhere maybe gives my own musical machines a similar kind of transparency, though I'm not sure I deserve to call my instruments the musical equivalent of Calder's creations."

EARLY JAZZ PIONEERS

"The famous jazz critics Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff published a book in 1955 called 'Hear Me Talkin' To Ya', which featured early jazz musicians analysing how and why pioneers like Buddy Bolden played the way they did. In New Orleans in the early 20th century the main venue was the French Opera House, but musicians like Bolden were playing their music in the city's cafes and honky-tonks.

"Most of them were not trained as musicians, so their goal was to develop different techniques for playing music than the ones used at the Opera House – from putting a kazoo in a clarinet to blowing a trumpet into a bucket of water. These alternative techniques have since been forgotten by most jazz musicians. I like the fact they developed something in contrast to the classical music played at the Opera House. I consider myself a self-taught musician, so I like the notion of approaching an instrument without any preconceived ideas or techniques."

HET APOLLOHUIS

"Paul Panhuysen opened a gallery in Eindhoven in 1980 called Het Apollohuis, which became very important to me and my work. Paul invited artists from places like The Kitchen in New York to create a sort of symposium, and the result was a book called 'ECHO: The Images Of Sound'. The main idea was that an artist should work on every aspect of a piece, not just an image or a sound. For over 20 years, Het Apollohuis invited artists who were doing sound and sculpture together, and the five catalogues are marvels.

"This gallery became the centre of the world for sound artists, hosting exhibits and four concerts a month until the 2000s. I played there several times myself, but the book was the first time I saw other artists express some of the ideas I had in mind. When you see something printed like that, you can read those ideas again and again and understand your own work better."

'Baba Soirée' by Pierre Bastien & Michel Banabila is out now on Pingipung

SHAKE IT

The instant photography renaissance?

Innovation in Polaroid cameras is not something we expected to see in 2023. But with the new I-2 camera, you won't find us complaining. It's Polaroid's first analogue instant camera with built-in manual controls, and honestly, it's the business. Six different camera modes give you a flexibility previously unavailable in other Polaroids, but combine that with a lens that is supposedly their sharpest yet, and you're away. Want 21st century camera tech crammed inside a classic Polaroid design? That'll be £599. **polaroid.com**

PULSE

DIGITAL ROSES

Ravishing avant-pop from south London

WHO?

Digital Roses' Trudi Veremu and Joanna Ramsay Patel met on a course in music composition and production at Goldsmiths College in London, though their paths to get there were wildly different. Joanna is classically trained – "whatever that means" – while vocalist Trudi was enmeshed in the Bristol dance scene, working with iconic drum 'n' bass producer Krust and his Full Cycle Records crew. Her original plan of "getting together with other women of colour to see if we could jam together" was quickly modified when she met with Joanna. "There was fire right away," says Trudi. "It was clear there was a vibe. By our second session we'd come up with three of the songs that'll be on our first album."

WHY DIGITAL ROSES?

In their own words, Digital Roses deal in "experimental pop". Released on seven-inch, their debut single 'Waterfalls' is an exercise in controlled euphoria that sees Joanna's tender vocal buffeted by brutal slabs of sound ("It's a heavily electronic project but also vocal-led so it has pop sensibilities in that regard," she says). Their follow-up, 'Under The Sea', sports glacial synths, heavily distorted vocals and a beguiling melody that's a close relative of the 'Blake's 7' theme. As you'd imagine, their influences run wide. Both namecheck Massive Attack as well as Current 93, The Knife and, crucially, Björk. "She's always had a sort of adaptability to any kind of sound and that's something we'd like to emulate," says Joanna.

TELL US MORE...

They have just finished putting together a multimedia performance ('Noise Petals') with poets, contemporary dancers and other musicians. Dubbing it a "quasi-opera", it premiered at Goldsmiths' theatre in September, and Trudi and Joanna plan on taking it to other venues in the New Year, around the same time they unleash their debut album, also called 'Noise Petals'.

WILL SIMPSON

'Waterfalls'/'Under The Sea' is out now on Feral Child

PULSE

GUAVA

Club-primed melancholia from star-to-be

WHO?

Guava is the pseudonym of London-born Bradley Hutchings, a producer and DJ crafting a special blend of lush ambient techno. His deft deployment of vocal samples and motorik rhythms, which lounge atop dark soundscapes, lead to music befitting sunrises. Gentle, sometimes propulsive, always with glorious synth washes.

WHY GUAVA?

Just ask the likes of Jamie xx, Mary Anne Hobbs and Ben UFO, who have all given their stamp of approval to Hutchings' stylings. With a succession of limited-run records released on underground electronic labels such as Control Freak and Holding Hands, he's fast becoming a mainstay of the Berlin club scene. Hutchings moved to the city a few years ago, even outputting via venerable techno producer Nick Höppner's imprint Touch From A Distance, and this month we welcome his much-anticipated debut album, 'Out Of Nowhere'. He says it was inspired by discovering electronic music as "another form of musical escapism" while touring and supporting acts like Band Of Horses and Men I Trust. The lead single, 'Universal Angel', features vocalist Maddie Ashman on a spectral, neon-hued synthwave beat, tickled by Hutchings' intricate guitar work.

TELL US MORE...

Hutchings' own musical bow reveals more strings the closer you look. A proficient guitarist, he has toured Europe with Latin-British artist Malena Zavala as well as rock artist LION. He enlisted Arlo Parks' guitarist Alex Blake and Eno-collaborating producer Leo Abrahams on his 'Guitarist' EP from last year, while working under the mentorship of the prolific Dutch producer Martyn. On top of all that, Hutchings has even helped pen scores for film and TV, including 'The Same Sky', acclaimed German director Oliver Hirschbiegel's spy drama about two families living either side of the Berlin Wall during the Cold War.

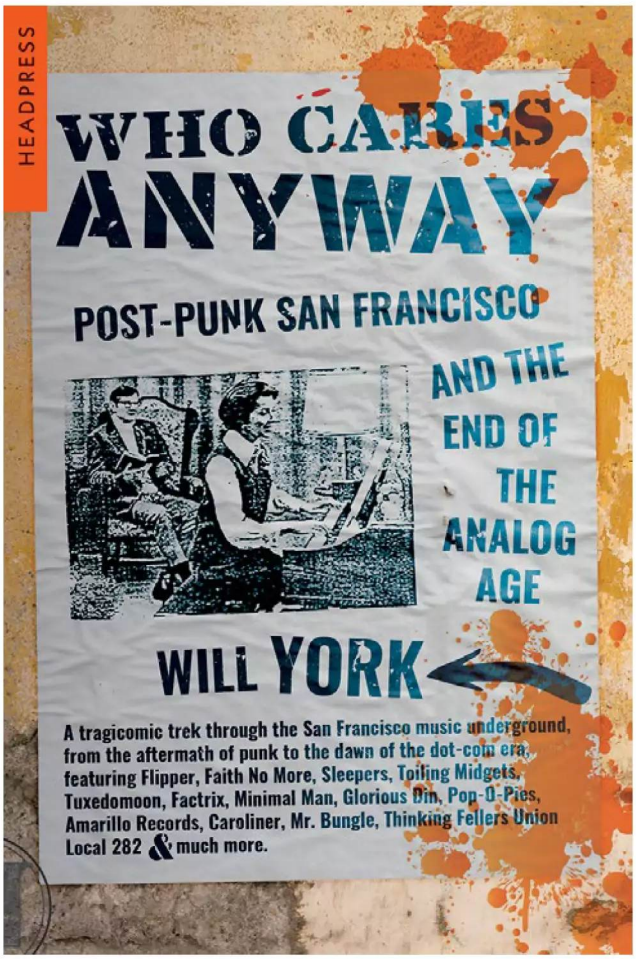
WILLIAM STOKES

'Out Of Nowhere' is out now on Kartel Music Group

POST-PUNK TALES

Tome charts the Bay Area underground

'Who Cares Anyway: Post-Punk San Francisco And The End Of The Analog Age' is a new oral history of the San Francisco underground edited by rising music writer Will York. In charting the aftermath of punk all the way to the 1990s, the publisher Headpress Books call it "a tale full of existential drama, tragic anti-heroes, dark humour, spectacular failures – and even a few improbable successes". We can't argue with that. Available in paperback and hardback, expect appearances from Tuxedomoon, Amarillo Records, Faith No More and many more. Priced from £22.99. **headpress.com**



HOUSEHOLD GAME

Cutting-edge surround sound arrives in your home

Dolby Atmos' audio empire continues to expand at a rapid pace, and it's now heading for your living room in the form of FlexConnect. Designed to be super simple to set up, this new technology allows anyone to pair wireless speakers placed around the room with their television. Microphones in the TV locate external speakers and intelligently optimise an Atmos experience for any seating arrangement and TV set-up, which means FlexConnect doesn't require you to purchase a fully fledged system straight out of the gate. Forget about exactly placing every speaker in the correct position. Instead, let your system grow and recalibrate as your arsenal of audio devices expands. Premiering next year, keep a look out for it. **dolby.com**

ENIGMAS

Sweeping the forgotten corridors of sound, **Scott Blixen** sets his sights on **Servi**

If true socialism had triumphed, the synth duo Servi would have almost certainly recorded the soundtrack to 'Blade Runner' and been globally revered synth gods. Instead, locked down in East Germany's surveillance state, the Christian rock group offered a unique type of sonic salvation to church-goers. Jan Bilk and Tomas Nawka formed Servi Pacis (Servants Of Peace) in 1975, but had slimmed down to Servi by the early 80s.

Their performances at religious gatherings branded them subversive in the GDR, where the church was seen as a threat to communist hegemony. While this may have impeded their recording career, it did have compensations. The group was gifted a Moog Prodigy after a priest in West Germany organised a collection among his parishioners. Smuggling synthesisers into the country was outrageously expensive, so Servi were truly blessed.

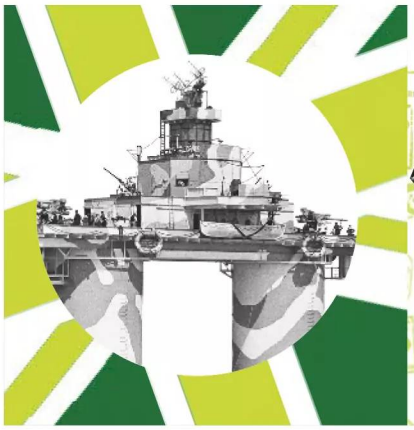
In 1986, the release of their debut LP 'Rückkehr Aus Ithaka' was belatedly sanctioned by Amiga, the GDR's only record label. Made independently, it was the first LP to be recorded outside a state-owned studio. Ostensibly an instrumental concept album about the epic quest of Odysseus in Homer's 'Iliad', Servi deny it implied social criticism, however veiled. What it did reveal was the group's schizophrenic nature, juxtaposing diverse elements into a herky-jerky, but spiritually nourishing, whole.

'Kirkes' is a multifaceted, 10-minute suite of shifting moods – which are at times meditative, sombre and joyful – augmented by electronically treated birdsong. The accordion melody of 'Sirenen' is cushioned by soothing synthesisers, until a startling cry of anguish rips through the reverie and a 'Miami Vice'-like theme gatecrashes the party. 'Laistrygonen' is, for my money, their most breathtaking piece, with a mesmeric piano motif, typewriter percussion and kaleidoscopic synth curlicues.

If 1988's follow-up album 'Pas De Deux In H' didn't reach the abstract brilliance of their first release, fans would only have been mildly miffed. Retaining their taste for oddness, the group combined the blandest flavours of 80s tech into a rich broth of uneasy listening. While similar ingredients were used in the glossy soundtracks of Czech defector Jan Hammer, Servi were describing a grittier landscape hidden behind the Iron Curtain.

It transpires that the authorities were justified in their suspicion of God-fearing fifth columnists. The falsified results of 1989's general election were revealed by Church groups, hastening the collapse of East Germany's already fractured totalitarian state. Servi survived the tumult of Die Wende (the country's post-communist transition), producing theatre music and spectacular live performances of their work.

The Lord does indeed move in mysterious ways.



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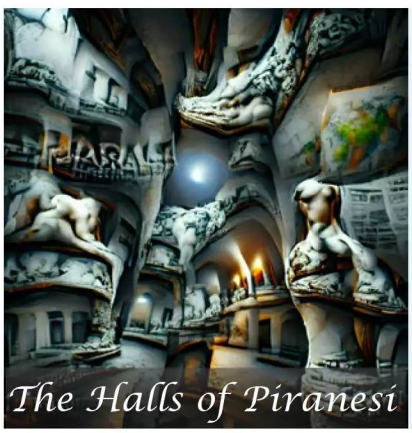

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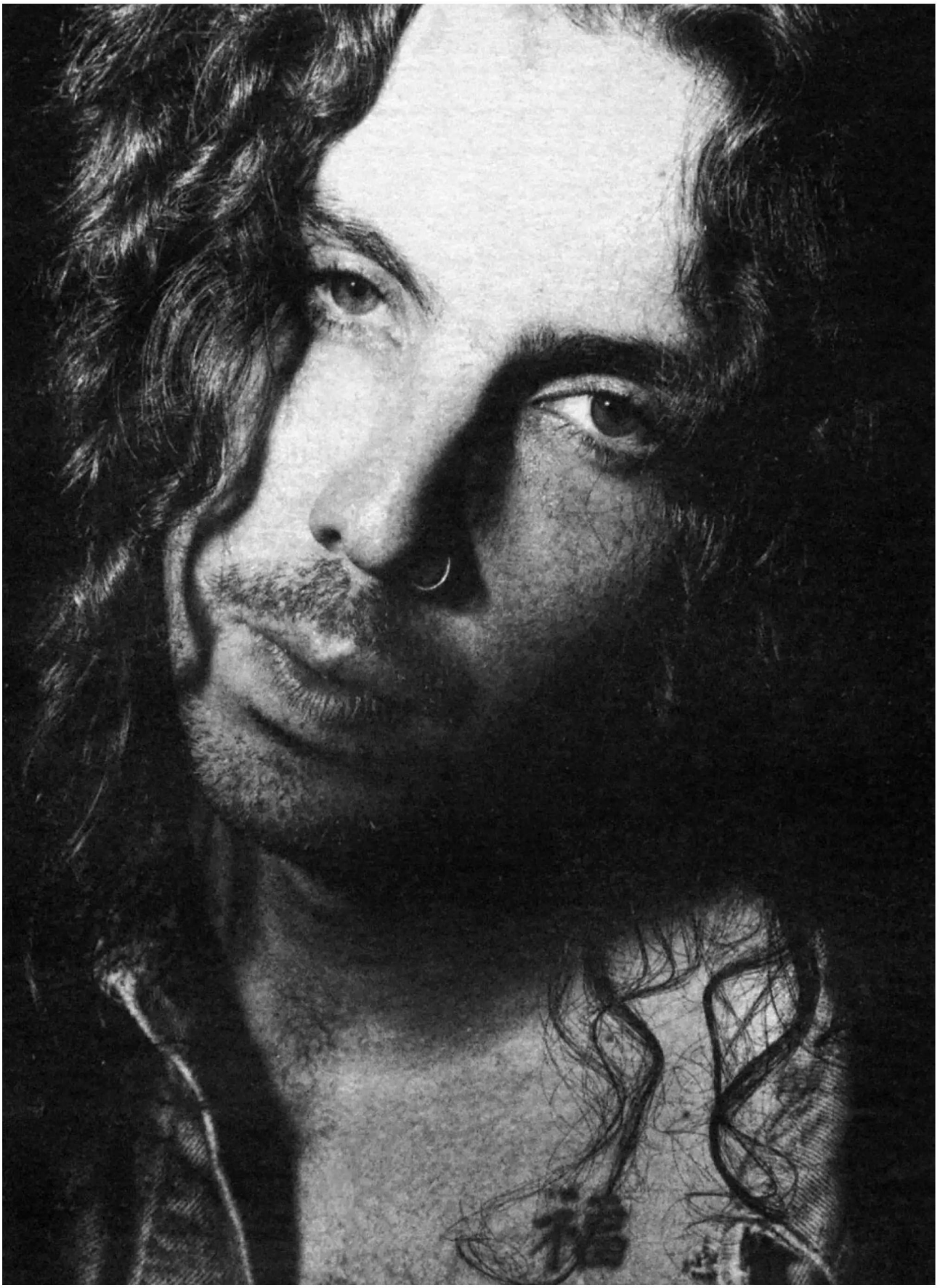


“I’m a sponge, I want to soak up everything”

The first interview with **Andrew Weatherall** outside of his role in the band Bocca Juniors, which was originally published in the UK weekly music paper Melody Maker on 17 August 1991

WORDS: PUSH
PICTURE: STEPHEN SWEET

Primal Scream, New Order, James, My Bloody Valentine, Saint Etienne, The Orb and S’Express are just some of the acts who have called upon Andrew Weatherall to remix their work over the last 18 months or so. In every case, Weatherall has literally demolished the track and built it back up into something totally different, something more of his own than of the original artist. The chances are you’ve got several of his records in your collection and you don’t even know it.

But although he is probably the most sought-after remixer in the land, a popular club DJ and a pillar of the Boy’s Own organisation, a role that involves running a record label, promoting events and publishing a magazine, Andrew Weatherall is an enigmatic figure. This is the first time he has agreed to be interviewed about his extensive work outside of Bocca Juniors, the group he pilots with fellow Boy’s Own bigwig Terry Farley.

“I have no desire to be in the limelight,” asserts Weatherall as he tucks a few wild strands of his long hair behind his ear. “I’m a lot happier staying in the backroom, keeping myself to myself. The trouble is that some people are starting to think I must be a right arrogant bastard and they’re filling the gaps in what they know about me with fantasy stories, like how I get paid 10 grand for a remix. Shit, I’ll do a remix for a couple of luncheon vouchers if the track is good and it’s all the band can afford.

“I’ve tried to steer clear of music industry bullshit as much as I possibly can. I don’t like the way the business works and I don’t like the sort of people who are involved. Most of them might as well be selling double glazing. I’d rather go out with my mates or sit at home having a quiet smoke than worry about being seen in the right company or the right places, you know, lunching with A&R men and popping across to the New York Seminar. As far as I’m concerned, stuff like that is a load of old bollocks.”

Andrew Weatherall’s name first surfaced in the pages of Boy’s Own, the now legendary music, football and fashion fanzine that he and Terry Farley started around five years ago as a London answer to The Farm’s ‘The End’ up in Liverpool. Sold in pubs and on the terraces, the magazine peaked in 1988, around the time that acid house clubs like Danny Rampling’s Shoom and Paul Oakenfold’s Spectrum introduced a whole new audience to dance music. Weatherall, who happily admits to never being into the funk and rare groove sounds that dominated London’s clubland in the year or two before acid, was one of them.

“I first went to Shoom to shut Farley up,” he says. “He had been going on about it for ages, saying how the music was mad and the place was full of football lads, Ibiza lads, and I just thought, ‘Fuck off, it sounds terrible’. But as soon as I walked in, I knew it was something special. The strobes and the smoke were on from start to finish and I had to keep touching people to make sure I wasn’t alone in there. I had a ball.”

Becoming a regular face at every acid club in town didn’t mean Weatherall lost any of his enthusiasm for the kind of left-field rock music that he’d been buying since he was a kid. In fact, his extensive and eclectic record collection gave him an unexpected opportunity when the Balearic beat boom turned clubbers onto groups like The Residents and The Woodentops. He persuaded Nicky Holloway to let him DJ at The Trip and a couple of months later Danny Rampling gave him a slot at Shoom. Alongside the latest house tunes, his sets regularly include everything from PiL and Chris & Cosey to Dub Syndicate and Ravi Shankar.

Towards the end of 1989, Weatherall bluffed his way into remixing, just as he had into DJing. He’d met Primal Scream a few times – “They used to sit in the corners of clubs looking winsome” – and volunteered his services when

Bobby Gillespie mentioned that the band were planning a dance remix of one of their tracks. That he managed to transform 'I'm Losing More Than I'll Ever Have', a fairly pedestrian song on the Primals' eponymous second album, into 'Loaded' is especially remarkable since Weatherall had only set foot inside a recording studio once before, when Paul Oakenfold invited him to help out on a mix of Happy Mondays' 'Hallelujah'.

"'Loaded' worked because I didn't have a clue what I was doing," he says. "I mean, all I really did was slip a beat underneath the track, then let that great melody and those brass stabs do the rest. It was simple and direct. I knew it was a strong track, but I was completely knocked back by how well it did. I originally said I'd be happy if we managed to sell a thousand white labels."

Not only did 'Loaded' come within a couple of places of cracking the UK Top 10, it also proved to be a bigger spark in the explosion of the so-called "indie dance" scene than The Stone Roses' 'Fools Gold' or Happy Mondays' 'Wrote For Luck'.

"Yeah, people talk about 'Loaded' breaking down barriers, but I don't think barriers are ever broken down, they just get moved to somewhere else. The saddest thing is how the indie dance scene is masquerading as some kind of youth rebellion. When I was 14, I wasn't allowed to have a Sex Pistols record in the house and my mum ripped my John Lydon poster down. Now you've got young Fred playing his latest indie tune and Mum comes in and it's, 'Oh, this is a nice song, I could do my vacuuming to this' and 'Oh, that's a nice stripey top, you've got one like that, haven't you?'. Youth rebellion? Bollocks.

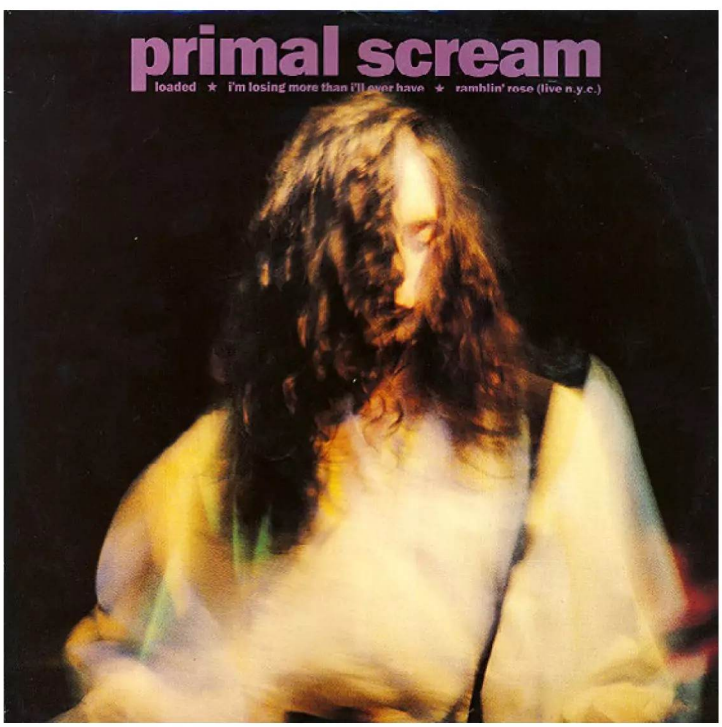
"Then there's all this stuff about how great it is that these groups are so ordinary. They're not ordinary, they're not busting their guts in a supermarket, they're fucking pop stars. The idea that they're saying to their fans, 'We're just the same as you' when they've signed record contracts for hundreds of thousands of pounds is sick. I mean, I met Norman Cook the other day, he's a smashing chap and all that, but he's into being very plain, very straight. He's chatting away about football and I'm thinking, 'Norman, you've had Number One records across the world, stop putting it on'."

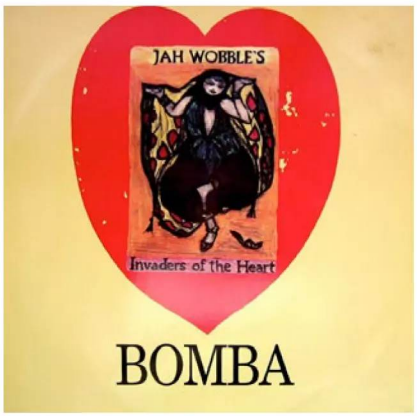
Every Weatherall remix is a testament to his bold approach and maverick spirit. Take the brass band samples and submarine bleeps of Jah Wobble's 'Bomba'. Or the way that celestial voices and nagging violins collide on My Bloody Valentine's 'Glider'. Or Word Of Mouth's 'What It Is', a record Weatherall describes as "heavy metal Soul II Soul". Then there's the recently released '101', a Finitribe track bolstered by a Santana bassline, and Primal Scream's 'Don't Fight It, Feel It', his fourth remix for the group. It incorporates the same whistle he used on New Order's 'World In Motion'. If you don't already know, it also features Manchester singer Denise Johnson instead of Bobby Gillespie.

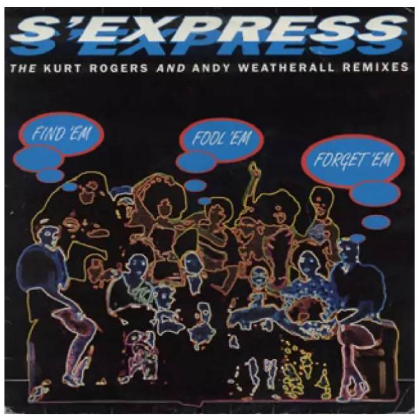
With each project, Weatherall has deviated further and further from the indie dance fusion that he helped to pioneer. He's made his mark with loping basslines and spacey, shuffling, percussion-driven, echo-ridden beats. The incredible weight of his tracks brings to mind the work of the early Jamaican dub masters.

"Dub is so primeval, so raw," he says. "It really is tribal music. Those mad stories of King Tubby building his dub machines out of old bedsprings are amazing. I also admire the way people like Joe Meek and Phil Spector used to work. OK, Tubby was a black guy living in Jamaica and Meek was a white homosexual from north London, but I see a strong link in the way they both threw the rulebook out of the window and let simple lunacy run its course. At the end of the day, I think that's what I do too.

"It's nice when people say they can recognise my work – even if an eight-minute intro and a huge bassline and some fuck-off breakbeat always makes it pretty obvious. I'm not into throwaway music, I want to stir people the way I've been stirred by something like Tom Waits' 'Kentucky Avenue'. I know it's probably impossible to do that with a club tune, but I'm having a fucking good try. If I heard the Primals' 'Higher Than The Sun' for the first time at a rave at six in the morning, I'd be on my knees yelling, 'Yes! Sign me up for the Jesus Army!'. That's my stamp – 'Yes!' with a big exclamation mark after it."







Have any artists complained about what you've done to their track?

"Most people who ask me to work on something know I'm going to totally destroy the original and the only whinge I've had was from James over my 'Come Home' remix. I did it ages ago, but it's only just been scheduled for a release because they basically didn't understand where I was coming from until they heard an acetate of it in a club. My mixes work best booming out on club speakers, not with everybody gathered around an office desk. It's like the way A&R men will sit there listening to a dance track and say, 'Hmm, it's a bit repetitive'. Of course it's fucking repetitive, it's got to hammer home an annoying riff, it's got to make people move.

"Apart from James, I also had a few problems with 'Don't Fight It, Feel It', because Bobby isn't actually singing on the track. Again, it was done months ago, way back last October. It's only being released now because Pete Tong at London Records offered to buy the tapes from Creation and put it out on Boy's Own. Alan McGee was obviously having none of that. At first, I was really angry about the delay. In retrospect, though, the fact that there's been such a massive buzz on the track for so long must be to the good."

Do you find it easier to remix than to record something from scratch with Bocca Juniors?

"Yeah, but whatever you are doing it's always easier and quicker to work alone. Bocca Juniors is a weird group because there's usually Terry Farley and Pete Heller on one side, and Hugo Nicolson and me on the other. Terry and Pete are into subtle little touches, ideas I'll often dismiss as disco shite, whereas I just want to whack the bass up full and stick loads of guitars in. I think they think I'm Rick Rubin. We'll probably end up having to record the Bocca album in two separate halves."

Given the chance, who else would you like to remix?

"I've dropped a few hints but the final decision isn't up to me, it's up to the artists. I've turned down more work than I've taken on, though. I turned down The Cure, for example. Their songs mean too much to people to have some acid house DJ fucking them up. Talk to me in six months when I'm sweeping the roads and I'll no doubt say, 'I wish I'd done that fucking Cure track'."

Over the last few weeks, Andrew Weatherall has remixed the next Jah Wobble single, 'Visions Of You', which has Sinéad O'Connor on backing vocals, and recorded a track called 'New Age Symphony' with In The Nursery under the name Trance Plant. Working with his Bocca Juniors accomplice Hugo Nicolson, he has also produced most of the forthcoming Primal Scream album, 'Screamadelica', which will be out on Creation next month.

Although he is now planning to take a long holiday – "I'm fed up of reading the word 'ubiquitous' next to my name" – there's no danger that he will lose his zest for music and for life in general.

"I'm a sponge," he laughs. "I want to soak up everything – music, literature, films, whatever you want to throw at me. The way I see it, the world is rapidly spiralling down the toilet and I want to take it all in while I can. It's like the last days of Pompeii, isn't it? I love it. I love weirdness. That's why I had my hair shaved off and got a Psychic TV tattoo when I was 18, although I could never be as regimented as Genesis P-Orridge. I've never worked my ideas into any sort of a game plan. All I'm doing is blundering up and down alleys, bumping into things here and there."

BOCCA JUNIORS' PETE HELLER, ANNA HAIGH AND ANDREW WEATHERALL – PHOTO: STEVE GULLICK

"A mind full of strange and interesting stuff"

Bocca Juniors vocalist Anna Haigh, Jagz Kooner from **The Sabres Of Paradise**, and acclaimed Faber author **Michael Smith** share their memories of working with Andrew Weatherall

WORDS: NEIL MASON

Alongside the seemingly endless onslaught of incredible remixes, the classy production jobs and the life-affirming DJ sets, Andrew Weatherall was a serial collaborator. His longest musical partnership was with Nina Walsh – Lady Sabrette to his Lord Sabre – but she was far from alone in having him ride shotgun.

Right from the very beginning, he was involved in a raft of projects where he was quite happy to be part of a bigger picture. Nowhere more so than at the Boy's Own fanzine. While it had been up and running since 1986 and was doing nicely, its popularity rocketed in the wake of the acid house revolution. A deal with London Records' dancefloor offshoot FFRR saw the Boy's Own crowd set up a label, on which it was suggested perhaps they'd like to release their own tunes. Billed as a Balearic supergroup and consisting of Andrew Weatherall, Terry Farley, Pete Heller and engineer Hugo Nicolson, Bocca Juniors were born.

The Weatherall tangled web machine was in full swing for Bocca Juniors' two singles, 'Raise (63 Steps To Heaven)' and 'Substance'. The collision of Boy's Own and Shoom proved crucial. It was at the pioneering acid club that Weatherall had met not only Nina Walsh but also Anna Haigh, who supplied the vocals to both Bocca records. Haigh later cemented her status as a rave legend when she joined Flowered Up and took on the role of The E Queen in their memorable 'Weekender' video.

Anyway, Walsh and Haigh weren't just passing acquaintances. They went way back.

"I was eight years old," remembers Haigh. "We'd just moved to the area and I was the new girl in the school. That's when I met Nina, who was a misfit like me. We hit it off straight away."

High jinks ensued from the off. Does Haigh have any stories she'd like to share? She does.

"We'd be running wild in the streets playing knock down ginger, trying to do roadside rope tricks for unwitting drivers, testing if we were psychic via unsuspecting teachers, letting off stink bombs in classrooms, playing green potato dare games, walking about in giant chicken suits…"

When they started exploring London's nightlife, Walsh ended up at Shoom with her older brother. She had so much fun, she was desperate for her best friend to go with her next time.

"I think we were about 17," says Haigh. "I'd only ever been to a couple of nightclubs before and they were more like cattle markets playing cheesy chart stuff. Shoom was different. It was like entering this world where you could lose yourself in the music. It sort of became part of you."

The two girls first collided with Weatherall on one of those early visits to Shoom.

"He walked past wearing a long, rubbery, false nose, like the droogs wear in 'A Clockwork Orange'," grins Haigh. "I wasn't sure if I'd seen it correctly, but there was a cheeky glint in his eye when he saw my jaw drop."

One thing led to another and Weatherall and Walsh were soon a couple. The gang was starting to come together. When Bocca Juniors were looking for a singer, it was Walsh who suggested her pal. And Haigh was already well prepared for the job.

"I'd played guitar at school and an older boy asked me if I'd join his punk band," she says. "It was in that band that I started singing too."

FFRR threw a pile of cash at Bocca Juniors to record 'Raise', their 1990 debut single, putting them into a swish Maida Vale studio.

"I can't recall the name of it, but it was very posh," notes Haigh. "I'd only ever recorded in people's living rooms before. I was pretty nervous, but there was a real buzz… plus I might have had a couple of shots!"

The second Boccas single, 'Substance', was a wholly different affair. Musically it was less Balearic, more the sound of Weatherall moving away from house music to do his own thing.

"Andrew wanted me to get more involved, so I wrote a tune on my acoustic and came up with some lyrics," says Haigh. "Andrew added to the words and Pete Heller put in that killer guitar line. The whole gang did their magic on it."

And then, after just two singles, Bocca Juniors were over.

"I was recording and touring with Flowered Up by that stage, as well as trying to do a degree in architecture, so I was happy," asserts Haigh. "Plus the boys all went on to do great things individually, so no one was losing out. It was the first time I had worked on something of that magnitude and it was a good learning experience. Looking back now, I'm very sad that I didn't do more work with Andrew, but 'Raise' is still a killer tune."

Jagz Kooner wasn't a complete rookie when he first met Weatherall. He already had his own little studio, where he was putting together songs with Dean Thatcher, a partnership that evolved into The Aloof.

"I was working with some great acts, including Jesus Jones and the DMC world champion DJ Chad Jackson," explains Kooner. "I was also making bootlegs with Marino Cicero, an amazing keyboard player and a studio wizard."

Word reached Kooner that Weatherall had played one of his bootlegs at a Boy's Own weekender and it had sent the crowd wild. Like all good up-and-coming producers, Kooner was out most nights of the week himself, keeping his finger on the musical pulse at a range of London clubs. His regular haunts included Flying at the Soho Theatre Club, which was tucked away behind The Astoria.

"I used to go to Flying because Dean Thatcher was the resident DJ there and they always had lots of guests too," says Kooner. "I was there one night with Gary Burns, who was also in The Aloof, and Andrew was there as well. He walked over and said he loved the music I was making… which was a bit of a surreal moment."

Weatherall was the most talked-about DJ and remixer at that time. The music he was playing and making was really pushing the boundaries, so such compliments were high praise.

"He suggested we should get into the studio together," continues Kooner. "It was one of those late-night conversations you generally can't remember the following day."

Weatherall was quite serious and called Kooner up a little later, inviting him and Gary Burns to collaborate on an overhaul of 'Visions Of You' by Jah Wobble's Invaders Of The Heart, featuring Sinéad O'Connor on vocals.

"It was the first time that I had been in a big posh studio," recalls Kooner. "Andrew was brilliant to be around and he loved all the ideas that Gary and I added to the remix. It was a very successful session."

With more remix work rolling their way, Weatherall suggested the three of them should record some original material together. They took the name The Sabres Of Paradise from the title of the B-side of Haysi Fantayzee's early 80s hit 'John Wayne Is Big Leggy', which itself came from the title of a 1960 book about Cossacks, and set up shop at Sabresonic Studios. Weatherall bigged up the place on his Kiss radio shows, talking about how he'd be walking around the long corridors. In truth, it was in a room above a shop on the Beavers Estate in Hounslow, west London.

"It was a great place, though," says Kooner. "It was kitted out with some superb equipment. Nina Walsh was in the same building, running the Sabres label with Andrew, and Chris Butler had his Whitenoise promotions company there, working with people like Massive Attack and Carl Craig. It was a really vibey place. We were a very creative unit, sometimes writing three or four tracks a week."

Or, according to the story, two in one afternoon. 'Theme' and 'Wilmot', wasn't it?

"That's correct," confirms Kooner. "With most of our songs, we'd usually put the original idea down in a few hours and then flesh it out over the course of a day."

And let's not forget they were responsible for the showstopping classic 'Smokebelch II'.

"When we were working on a song, we would never view it as anything special, it was just something else that needed finishing," says Kooner. "But afterwards, in the cold light of day, I think we were pleasantly surprised by how well that one turned out."

After a couple of releases on the Sabres imprint, there was a major label bunfight to sign the trio. They were one of four acts being tipped for very big things at that point. The other three were Underworld, The Prodigy and The Chemical Brothers.

"I was never really concerned about the bidding war that was going on," notes Kooner. "We were massive fans of Warp and we weren't particularly interested in signing with anyone else. We felt they were the only label that would give us the creative freedom to do whatever we wanted."

The Sabres Of Paradise released three albums on Warp between 1993 and 1995, but like Bocca Juniors they fizzled out far too soon.

"It was a great team of people involved and I'm super-proud of everybody, but the demise of Sabres is something that still troubles me," admits Kooner. "I think we could have done a lot more. We were only just getting started. But I suppose things sometimes run their course and maybe that makes the myth of The Sabres Of Paradise far bigger than the reality might have ever been."

JAGZ KOONER

MICHAEL SMITH WITH ANDREW WEATHERALL, NINA WALSH AND FRANCK ALBA

In 2013, Weatherall entered into a curveball collaboration when he was named as the inaugural artist-in-residence for Faber Social, an imprint specialising in music books. You'd kind of expect a publishing house to give that role to a writer, but this was no ordinary appointment.

"He had an incredible mind," says Michael Smith, who was the first Faber Social author to work with Weatherall. "Beyond music, he was endlessly curious. He was a real Renaissance man, the sharpest pin in the box. He was more erudite than most of the literary types you get hanging round Faber & Faber."

The plot thickens when you learn that Smith first met Weatherall at an arts festival.

"It was the Port Eliot Festival in Cornwall," he explains. "It's this fairytale setting in the grounds of an old aristocratic pile with a gilded collection of artistes and punters. I was off my nut and a man with an enormous Victorian cricketer's beard came over and shook my hand. His arm was covered in tattoos. I thought, 'Fuck, it's Alan Moore!'. He said, 'Mr Smith… I'm a fan of your work… Andrew Weatherall'. I thought, 'Fuck, it's Andrew Weatherall! Even better!'."

Where do you go with that kind of thing? Smith had spent his formative years with 'Screamadelica' ringing in his ears. To discover the man whose vision that was happened to be a fan of your work…

"I was really flattered," says Smith. "It transpired we were into a lot of the same things – esoteric ideas and less trodden paths. He had a mind full of such strange and interesting stuff. I found him totally inspiring."

At the time, Faber Social were gearing up for the publication of 'Unreal City', Smith's third novel.

"I had a meeting with my editor Lee Brackstone and he suggested I did a musical collaboration for the book, as I'd done with my first novel, 'The Giro Playboy'," says Smith. "I was like, 'That's a great idea… you'll never guess who I met last week in Cornwall'."

As Smith eloquently puts it, "shy lads get nowt", so they asked a mutual friend, Heavenly boss Jeff Barrett, to test the water. They were thrilled when Weatherall was up for it. And even more thrilled when he brought an album's worth of original material to 'Unreal City'. It was essentially a soundtrack to the book.

"I couldn't believe it," chuckles Smith. "I remember going to the studio to hear the tracks for the first time. We were both a bit nervous, in case I didn't like them, but I was overjoyed."

'Unreal City' was published in September 2013 and the music was released as a limited edition six-track CD and one-sided 10-inch featuring a Weatherall remix of 'The Deep Hum (At The Heart Of It All)'. The tracks were also played live at various readings.

"We had Nina Walsh and Franck Alba on guitars, violins and more, Andrew doing 'whizz-bangs' on a mixing desk with this bizarre device I didn't really understand, and me reading from the book over the top," says Smith. "It was a breath of fresh air compared to all those boring book readings. Who gets to promote their new book with Andrew Weatherall making weird noises in the background? It felt like a massive privilege."

Weatherall and Walsh subsequently composed the scores for 'Stranger On The Shore', a trilogy of short films Smith made with Maxy Bianco about the peculiarities of places on the English coast.

"The music fits so beautifully," smiles Smith. "We did a few gigs for those too, culminating in a show at the National Film Theatre, which was pretty special. Andrew sang a song after I'd done my reading."

Weatherall was hugely proud of being Faber Social's artist-in-residence, but he could never quite pin down precisely what his role entailed.

"I think that's why he was so good at it," says Smith. "His modus operandi was to not limit things with a definition, but to let the work decide where it wanted to go. He was very into that idea. I used to watch him in the studio with Nina and it was always unplanned and unfettered. They'd spend a lot of time chatting and joking, then noodling about, exploring a musical idea, and suddenly it would gel into something concrete. He was the freest artistic spirit I ever met and that had a lot to do with his refusal to define his role."

With most of his other collaborations, Weatherall's restlessness, his need to continually move on, saw the projects come to an end ahead of their time. And in a way, in the very worst way, the same thing happened to his work with Michael Smith.

"The last time that I ever saw him, he DJed at my missus' pub, The Marina Fountain in St Leonards," says Smith. "This wasn't too long before he passed away. My cousin Darren was there and he was telling me how he believed Andrew had this uncanny instinct to hone in on whatever the frequency is that brings about a raising of human consciousness, like going to an evangelical church or in the way a voodoo ceremony might work. I remember thinking Andrew did seem to be plugged into some higher energy that night and was channelling it for us. It's a nice last memory to have of him."

"Getting a groove going in a cloud of smoke"

The inside story of 'Phonox Nights', the forthcoming album from Andrew Weatherall and Nina Walsh's **Woodleigh Research Facility** project, which includes some of Weatherall's final original recordings

WORDS: BEN GILBERT
PICTURES: JOHN BARRETT

A jumbo mirror ball hangs above the dancefloor at Phonox nightclub in Brixton, south London, like a distant star. As icons of dance music, these revolving spheres have few peers, delivering the electric bolts of light and synaptic promise of transcendence that act as elemental forces within such de facto escape rooms.

It was under this particular glittering orb that Andrew Weatherall played what would be among his last DJ sets, at A Love From Outer Space (ALFOS), the monthly club he ran in collaboration with Sean Johnston. It was here too that he road-tested his final original recordings, nine of which are about to be released as 'Phonox Nights', a new album from his Woodleigh Research Facility project with Nina Walsh.

Weatherall crafted all of these tracks in partnership with Walsh, a less public but no less crucial presence in the tale of one of the most important figures in British electronic music. In many ways, his story is her story and it's one that traverses several decades, multiple generations, and a celebrated collection of music, people and moments in time that cemented Weatherall's place in the pantheon of dance culture long before his sudden and shocking passing almost four years ago.

Weatherall and Walsh established Woodleigh Research Facility in 2015, producing two albums – 'The Phoenix Suburb (And Other Stories)' that same year and '127 To Facility 4' in 2018 – plus a handful of other releases. More WRF material has emerged since then, including the posthumous collection 'Torschlusspanik', but 'Phonox Nights' is significant and symbolic for many reasons. Most notably because Weatherall was working with Walsh on the album in the days before he died of a pulmonary embolism in February 2020 at the age of just 56.

The tracks were recorded at Walsh's Facility 4 studio, located in a pindrop somewhere between Streatham and Mitcham. Describing the environs of this space as "kind of medieval", Walsh recently abandoned the rogue denizens of south London for the altogether calmer backdrop of rural Dorset. Here, among the rolling hills and vertiginous skies that played host to Thomas Hardy as he wrote 'Far From The Madding Crowd', she is now free to hatch ideas for fresh creative endeavours at what has been christened Facility 5. Understandably, 'Phonox Nights' is central to these plans.

During the course of a two-hour conversation, Nina Walsh employs an eclectic range of adjectives when she talks about Weatherall – "artist", "conceptualist", "curator", "arranger", "librarian", "flaneur" and "wardrobe master". But she also perceives the 'Phonox Nights' album as the moment that his years of wizarding around with the magic of music-making reached a point of realisation where he was genuinely firing the wand.

Weatherall famously had little working knowledge of recording studios when he assisted Paul Oakenfold on the club remix of 'Hallelujah' for Happy Mondays in 1989. His last two solo albums, however, 2016's 'Convenanza' and 2017's 'Qualia' – the latter featuring the credit "Programmed by Andrew Weatherall" for the first time – represented an intellectual and technological breakthrough in his experiences and the processes that underpinned them. When he pondered how "anyone can make music and what a double-edged sword that's turned out to be" in a 2016 interview with Alexis Petridis in The Guardian, he would have to include himself in this conundrum.

"I was just waiting for him to become confident and competent enough," notes Walsh. "And 'Phonox Nights' was that point. He'd always been able to make music, if he had the right translator, but now he was a lot more in control. He wasn't having to rely on me to press all the buttons."

Weatherall and Walsh began work on what would become 'Phonox Nights' in 2019, using what she describes as "a very old loop programme" running on "an antiquated computer system" bought through eBay for £30.

"He was relegated to a back room with no windows," she says. "He'd be getting a groove going with beats, sitting in a cloud of smoke. As soon as his ears had settled on a fixed key and bpm, I'd start creating the additional parts – loops, melodies, harmonies, and so on. He'd ask for something specific – 'It needs this, it needs that,' he'd say – which I would duly deliver on a flash drive and load into his working library."

Walsh explains how she would be working across analogue and digital inputs as they shaped the recordings to a point of near completion.

"And that was when 'one more elephant' came in," she says. "This would be something that Andrew believed was still missing and he would play it – a simple melody, three or four notes, little undercurrents rumbling below the surface."

Among the resources available to Weatherall for 'Phonox Nights' were a number of sound libraries. These included a vast collection of drum loops amassed over a period of 20 years by Walsh's partner Erick Legrand, who passed away in 2011. The pair also "totally ransacked" a trove of "incredible early musique concrète 78s" Walsh had digitised. To pay for the project, she suggested they create a copyright-free album of material for Loopmasters, 'Andrew Weatherall & Nina Walsh WRF Lab Test', which the sampling outlet markets as "a mystical collection of sounds delivered from another space and time" on their website.

This cosmic context is fitting. Because if the base inspiration for 'Phonox Nights' was as concrete as the bricks and mortar of the Brixton club, WRF's execution is much closer to the starry-eyed ideology of ALFOS as a musical concept. The night was astutely billed as "an oasis of slowness in a world of increasing velocity" and Weatherall coined the term "drug chug" for this sonic adventure, prompting one journalist to herald it as a "space age, kosmische, ecstatic trip".

In the earliest stages of 'Phonox Nights', Weatherall and Walsh envisioned creating an imaginary soundtrack for A Love From Outer Space that they could debut in real time, playing out chunks of material via the club's state-of-the-art Funktion One sound system to the crowd of unsuspecting ALFOS devotees.

"We tried to keep everything to the ALFOS bpm, which meant not going over 122, although we did do that a few times," says Walsh, who sees the album as an extension of her partner's broader musical practice. "That's what Andrew was doing most of the time anyway. He was building tools for his trade and that was it. We had no plan. We had no marketing strategies with anything we were doing. He was building tools so he could go out on the weekend and play these pieces of music that no one else had. Most people didn't know what they were listening to. It was hilarious seeing them trying to Shazam the music."

The result is a little over an hour of engrossing, enveloping space disco, powered by a unified stylistic identity befitting Weatherall's whip-smart, sartorially sharp presence. The striking artwork on the front cover of the album is inspired by retro propaganda imagery and there's a huge mirror ball at its centre. The mirror ball also appears on the back of the sleeve along with a rocket, which is something that had become synonymous with the ALFOS nights over the years.

Orbiting in the outer reaches amid clusters of intergalactic interference and snaking melodic pulses, there are some familiar, nostalgic flashes on 'Phonox Nights', despite Weatherall's stated disdain for anything other than forward-thinking songwriting. Walsh admits the pair remained wedded to the sound and soul of acid house, which is reflected in how the Roland TB-303 is introduced within 60 seconds on the title track.

Elsewhere, a percussive loop seemingly derived from the same power source as A Guy Called Gerald's 'Voodoo Ray' propels 'Wolves Don't Chase Hope (They Chase Rabbits)', while the icy synth washes of 'Boots & The Pike' are a reminder that both The Sabres Of Paradise and Two Lone Swordsmen, two of the other main acts in Weatherall's back catalogue as a performer, were signed to Warp Records. As Walsh confirms, the latter was inspired by his love of Stoodley Pike, the eerie, alien monument that sits atop a 1,300-foot hill near Todmorden, in the South Pennines of West Yorkshire.

Another highlight of the album is 'Gates To The South', which recalls a comedy sketch about Balham – where Weatherall would catch the train home to Walthamstow after a day in the studio – originally written by Frank Muir and Denis Norden for the 1950s BBC radio series 'Third Division' and later popularised by Peter Sellers. It was the last track the pair recorded.

So what was the WRF studio routine like?

"It was quite rigid," replies Walsh. "Andrew was a grafter. He had a strong work ethic. He'd be out DJing all weekend and then he would be buzzing to get back into the studio, to tell the tale in music. I don't know how he had the stamina to do it."

Did he have any ambitions for 'Phonox Nights'?

"Oh, he wasn't ambitious, not in the usual sense of the word," says Walsh. "He didn't give a shit what people thought about his music. I remember Jagz Kooner once saying that Andrew was the least paranoid person he'd ever met. He cared more about the people who'd paid to see him DJ and how they reacted on the dancefloor. That was much more important to him."

As had become a tradition in their lengthy musical alliance, Weatherall declared "Print!" on 'Phonox Nights' during their final day in the studio to signal the album's completion. By this point, however, Walsh was becoming concerned that there was a problem with his health, which seemed to be deteriorating at the start of 2020. As it turned out, that day would be the last time she saw him.

Weatherall and Walsh first met inside a speaker cabinet in 1988 at Shoom, Danny Rampling's fabled acid house night in Southwark Street, south London, that made heroes of DJs such as Terry Farley and Carl Cox. And, of course, Weatherall.

"He wanted to check that I was still breathing," says Walsh. "I was very conscious and I was thoroughly enjoying myself. I fitted quite perfectly in one of those big old bass bins."

So began a friendship that would go on to play a significant role in both their personal and professional lives across more than 30 years. But their improbable meeting at Shoom is certainly not the only comical and unlikely part of the story. Walsh grew up in the town of Frimley in Surrey and as a teenager she had a hand – quite literally – in one of the most famous British children's television programmes of all time.

"'The Sooty Show' rehearsal and model-making studios were in Frimley Green," she says. "I'd written to them for work experience when I was at college but no-one replied. My mum said to me, 'Right, let's go down there', so we did, and I went in with my big quiff and brothel creepers. I think they were quite shocked and impressed that I'd turned up."

So much so, Walsh was offered a job on the spot. Her role? To operate the character of Sweep for the duration of the summer holidays.

"I was asked to start on the Monday," she adds. "They came and picked me up in the Sootymobile."

A few months after their initial encounter, Weatherall and Walsh began a romantic relationship that started with a date watching Prince play Wembley Arena on the 'Lovesexy' tour and ended around eight years later. During this period, Walsh worked as a club promoter at London Records and as manager of WAU, the label founded by The Orb's Alex Paterson and Killing Joke bass man Youth. She was also A&R for the musical arm of Boy's Own, the fanzine, record company and events outfit Weatherall set up with Terry Farley, Pete Heller, Cymon Eckel and Steve Mayes. It was Boy's Own that acted as the vehicle for Weatherall to make his name in underground culture.

Walsh was subsequently Weatherall's partner at Sabres Of Paradise, the imprint he launched in 1993, around the same time that he formed the band of the same name with Jagz Kooner and Gary Burns from The Aloof. The first release on the label was their interpretation of Throbbing Gristle's 'United' and this was followed by other records by the trio, as well as material by the likes of Secret Knowledge, Waxworth Industries and Technova. A little later, Walsh expanded this portfolio with Sabrettes, a second collaborative label, whose roster included The Rabettes, Slab, Inky Blacknuss, Tony Sapiano and Chelsea Grin.

"We were learning on the job and got ourselves into all sorts of pickles for the love of music," she says of their work as record company bosses. "It just grew and grew."

Over the years, Walsh has also developed an enviable songwriting and production portfolio of her own. The Rabettes and Slab were her projects, the former a collaboration with Kris Needs from Secret Knowledge and the latter with Lol Hammond from The Drum Club, and she released a solo album called 'Bright Lights & Filthy Nights' in 2009. She has also written tracks for The Orb, engineered for Fuck Buttons and Warpaint, and contributed music to two seasons of the BBC TV drama 'Killing Eve'. She is now the focus of a biography, provisionally titled 'Punkadelic!', which is currently being written by Kris Needs, and the pair star in the off-the-wall monthly YouTube podcast 'Into The Cosmic Hutch'. Watch out for the occasional guest appearance of Sweep on the show. Yes, really.

It's surely no exaggeration to say that Weatherall's life changed with the release of Primal Scream's 'Loaded' in February 1990. Having befriended Bobby Gillespie at a Shoom outdoor rave in Brighton, he went on to write an NME live review of the Primals' show at Exeter Arts Centre a few weeks later, using the pseudonym Audrey Witherspoon. Warming to his connections and credentials, the NME piece prompted the band to request Weatherall remix 'I'm Losing More Than I'll Ever Have' and light a fire under their smouldering career.

Walsh describes this immortal record as "such a fantastic indulgence", noting that it highlighted the infinite possibilities offered by sample culture at the time. The success of Primal Scream's accompanying 'Screamadelica' album, however, which featured an array of productions masterminded by Weatherall and won the Mercury Music Prize in 1992, proved to be a more conflicting experience.

"He felt like he'd created an absolute monster," explains Walsh. "He felt like Dr Frankenstein, because suddenly all this indie dance shit happened. A lot of those bands weren't any good in the first place, but record companies would insist on getting dance DJ remixes and the results were quite often atrocious. Andrew felt partially responsible for that, although he was happy with 'Screamadelica' itself. There are some great tunes on it and a lot of fun was had. Too much fun, probably."

'Screamadelica' gave Weatherall the lionised profile and position required to facilitate the most creatively rewarding path forward. And while his first bespoke musical project was relatively short-lived, The Sabres Of Paradise produced three strong albums in three years. Plus the epic 'Smokebelch II', of course, arguably the band's most affecting track and indisputably a post-club anthem. When the trio dissolved in 1995, he quickly formed Two Lone Swordsmen with Keith Tenniswood.

How did Weatherall enjoy being more fully integrated into a collective?

"He always loved that whole gang thing The Clash had," says Walsh. "He had a look he wanted for Sabres and he took the band out shopping for these long leather trench coats. What they were projecting was quite sinister and he had it all in his head, even if he needed Jagz and Gary to realise his ideas in the studio."

It was Weatherall's singular work as a remixer that really crystallised his reputation, though, bringing together a forensic, esoteric musical taste with a celebratory, universal execution. It also provided a forum for mourning fans to pay homage in the days after his death. Among the many online tributes, Crack magazine produced a partially crowdsourced Spotify playlist running to more than 100 tracks, highlighting his deconstructive skill, dynamic range and prolific output.

What does Walsh think he was most proud of?

"His wardrobe," she quips, before namechecking his 1990 reworking of the James track 'Come Home' as one of his personal favourite mixes. "That comes to mind because he felt it was a milestone for him. He came back from the studio feeling really chuffed with what he'd done and it certainly was a great track. He never charged much for his remixes, he never did it for the money, and in the end he couldn't be arsed to do any more. He was giving a lot of his ideas away and he preferred to save them for this wonderful music we were creating at Facility 4.

"To be honest, I think the work he was most proud of was 'Phonox Nights', mainly because he did so much of it himself. By that stage, he had achieved a technical level he'd never got to before and that freed him up to start being creative with keyboards."

Andrew Weatherall's reputation has continued to build in the years since his passing in 2020. A series of events took place in the UK a few months ago under the banner AW60, marking what would have been his 60th birthday, and there have been two recent documentaries about his now legendary "Fail We May, Sail We Must" tattoo, one a short film and the other a radio programme. All of which has contributed to what Nina Walsh refers to as the "hero worship" formed in the slipstream behind him, both in life and in death.

"Andrew was completely unique," she states. "There was nobody like him. There never will be. A lot of people think they're like Andrew, but they're not, they're a million miles away. He had the most incredible brain. His knowledge was so varied. He was quite brutal and harsh at times, though. He didn't like time-wasting. He was funny as fuck…"

She pauses for a brief moment.

"I miss him," she says.

There has also been lots more music. 'The Weatherdrive', for example, an online repository of 1,300 hours of Weatherall's studio mixes, live recordings and radio shows, built by fans and spanning 1988 to 2020. There's a wealth of material to be heard on the Woodleigh Research Facility Bandcamp page too, which Walsh has been busy populating with an ever-growing collection of unreleased tracks from her vast archive. Her latest WRF uploads are the 'Apparently Solo' EPs, five volumes so far, each of them another engrossing chapter in the untamed adventures in left-field electronic music recorded during this period at Facility 4.

'Apparently Solo Volume 4' is the standout. Released in August, it features three mixes of 'Borderland', a track that sounds very much like a genuine "lost" Weatherall classic. Or, as he once told Walsh, "The next 'Smokebelch'". It was due to be debuted at a 2020 WRF live show at the Barbican in London as part of the launch of Richard King's 'The Lark Ascending: People, Music And Landscape In Twentieth-Century Britain' book for Faber & Faber, where Weatherall was artist-in-residence. Circumstances meant that the gig sadly never happened.

Jagz Kooner's euphoric take on 'Borderland', which Walsh invited the Sabres man to do in 2021, culminates in a bedazzled, unmistakable sample of Weatherall whispering, "Can you see the rockets?". In tandem with 'Phonox Nights', it frames the final trajectory of the feted career of a true legend of electronic music, now a distant star himself.

Woodleigh Research Facility's 'Phonox Nights' is released by Facility 4 / !K7 on 22 November

MR NOSEY PARKER – PHOTO: LISA BURKE

"He was the funniest man I'd ever met"

ANDREW WEATHERALL

An extract from **'Punkadelic!'**, a forthcoming book detailing Nina Walsh's madcap adventures with Andrew Weatherall, including some epic high jinks at the legendary acid house club Shoom

WORDS: KRIS NEEDS

"1988 was the maddest year of my life and definitely the most surreal, what with A-levels, acid house, Shoom, Sooty and Sweep, ecstasy… and meeting Andrew."

When Nina springs to her feet like an electrified gazelle to emphasise a memory or make a point, it's like she's subconsciously flipped some kind of internal default switch as she lets fly with the unfettered passion that's propelled her through life. Whether music is playing or not, she's prone to busting moves ingrained in the crosshatch circuitry that drives her natural flow, elements of her champion disco dancer adolescence intertwining with a loose-limbed twinkle betraying serious active service on acid house club podiums back in the day.

At 17, Nina found herself in the vanguard of the next major underground revolution to engulf the UK, after her teenage whoopee detector propelled her through the strawberry smoke portals of Shoom at the Fitness Centre on Southwark Street in south London in early 1988. It's fair to say this club in particular changed Nina's life, like it did for so many others, setting her on the roller-coaster path she still traverses today. Accompanied by Anna Haigh, they took to this early manifestation of acid liberation like disco ducks to water, cavorting in the intimate birth cocoon of a new movement before its innocence got smothered and smiley culture went ballistic.

As she still does now, Nina kept a diary, albeit increasingly sporadically as the hurricane she found herself swept along by gained momentum. An entry in February 1988 details her first Shoom, with her brother Craig and her mate Chris Butler.

"Last night MUST have been the best night out EVER! I went out with Craig and the Greencroft crew from Hounslow. We went to this 'Shooming' club in south London. It was soooooo cool. Smoke machines, strobes, house music and everybody was taking extacy [sic]. I've never experienced such a feeling! At first not much happens, but as soon as you take a deep breath and get into the bass then… fucking hell!!! I was just standing there but every part of my body apart from my feet was moving insanely to the music. I just couldn't stop dancing unless I sat inside the speaker. I sat inside the speaker and still the music was not loud enough as it waved through every part of my body. TURN IT UP!! Everyone cuddled everyone and I-D is right, it is a case of 'Let's fall in love for the next 10 hours'!"

"It was like walking into the unknown at Shoom," says Nina, 35 years on. "The first thing was this massive queue outside and Jenni Rampling with her clipboard. 'You can go in' or 'No, fuck off'! It was like being part of a gang, with the same crew every week. You'd spend half the night hanging out by the toilets drinking Lucozade, just talking to random people. It wasn't like any other club. Nobody was posing, even though you'd got Boy George and Leigh Bowery walking around. You couldn't spot a raver because we weren't ravers. It wasn't a fashion yet. You could be so shit-faced and you'd think, 'Well, nobody knows about any of this, we're untouchable'. Obviously, that didn't last long."

Just about all of Nina's old Shoom comrades interviewed for this book apologised for their hazy or even non-existent memories of events, facts and dates (including Nina). Woven together, these often hilarious recollections paint a vivid picture of the brief period before acid house spiked the nation's water supply. It was at Shoom that Nina first met Andrew Weatherall.

"I was in a bass bin at Shoom," she says matter-of-factly. "I was curled up in it like a snail, with my feet sticking out. I was dragged out by my Converse by this man with a big plastic nose on. It was Mr Nosey Parker. It was Andrew. He pulled me out of the speaker because he wanted to make sure that I was actually alive."

"I loved Andrew from the moment I met him," declares record promo titan Chris Butler. "I've got so many memories of being on the dancefloor at Shoom with him just tranced out with his eyes shut. We were both well-versed in psychedelic drugs and when you do those with people you get to look inside their soul. I certainly looked into his a few times and what was in there was all good."

Chris remembers Nina, Anna Haigh and their mate Timna Rose as "a ball of insane energy! If you had the three of them together, it was fucking madness. They used to force you to take them to places and wear all sorts of mental outfits. Bandanas featured quite heavily."

"At the time, I had no idea we were part of something really massive," says Anna. "We were just, 'Oh, this is happening, let's go along to this now'. We were so young. If we'd been clubbing for 10 years already it would've been really different, but we were babies."

"I'll never forget that first time I went to the Fitness Centre," says Timna. "I just remember that feeling of walking down the stairs and that energy… plus I was coming up at the same time. It sounds cheesy but I said, 'I've been waiting for this my whole life'. It was like the beginning of time."

"Shoom was like you had died and gone to heaven in those first months," sighs DJ/face Jimmy Jewell, the overlooked key player in London's early acid house scene who gave Andrew Weatherall his first London club residency. "It was a magic bubble for a magic time. I remember tripping while driving to the club in my Fiat 500. I had a six-foot Pink Panther on my lap, with his paws tied to my hands and the steering wheel."

Nina's enthusiasm for Shoom grew as the weeks passed. Her diary entry for 26 March reads:

"WOW! I'm still Shooming! This time the pills were quite sensual and there was a lot of Lucozade being poured over heads and sucking of fingers!! Very strong visuals this time and when I looked into the mirror I really thought that there was a girl who looked just like me! I met loads of new people again. Gutted when it ended and it seemed to fly by so quickly. Ah, I can't wait until next weekend. Friday I'm Shooming, then Saturday it's Margate Shoom!!"

The Shoom outings of this period often became confrontations between saucer-eyed revellers invading from a newly discovered parallel universe and reactionary soul boys tutting like disapproving parents. For Nina, Shoom's Easter weekend day-trip to Margate, followed by a disco in Broadstairs, where Danny Rampling was booked to play a soul set, became significant for several reasons, not least Andrew calling the acid bingo on one of the coaches and Jimmy Jewell on the other.

"Everybody met outside the Shakespeare pub on Southwark Street," remembers Chris. "Two coaches turned up and everybody piled on. Most took acid before or when they got on the coach. It was absolute insanity – two fucking coachloads of people on acid! We got to Margate, hit a joke shop, bought all these flower garlands and plastic swords, and then walked around terrifying people – though not intentionally."

"When we were in the club, it was fucking surreal because you had Gilles Peterson and his soul scene, but then a hundred of us from Shoom turned up completely off it," says Jimmy Jewell (who coined the phrase "Get right on one matey"). "The first time I really met Nina was on the dancefloor. We both had on blue and white striped T-shirts and looked like a pair of Humphreys. We started dancing and then we tied our shoelaces together, literally rolling around on the dancefloor tying them together."

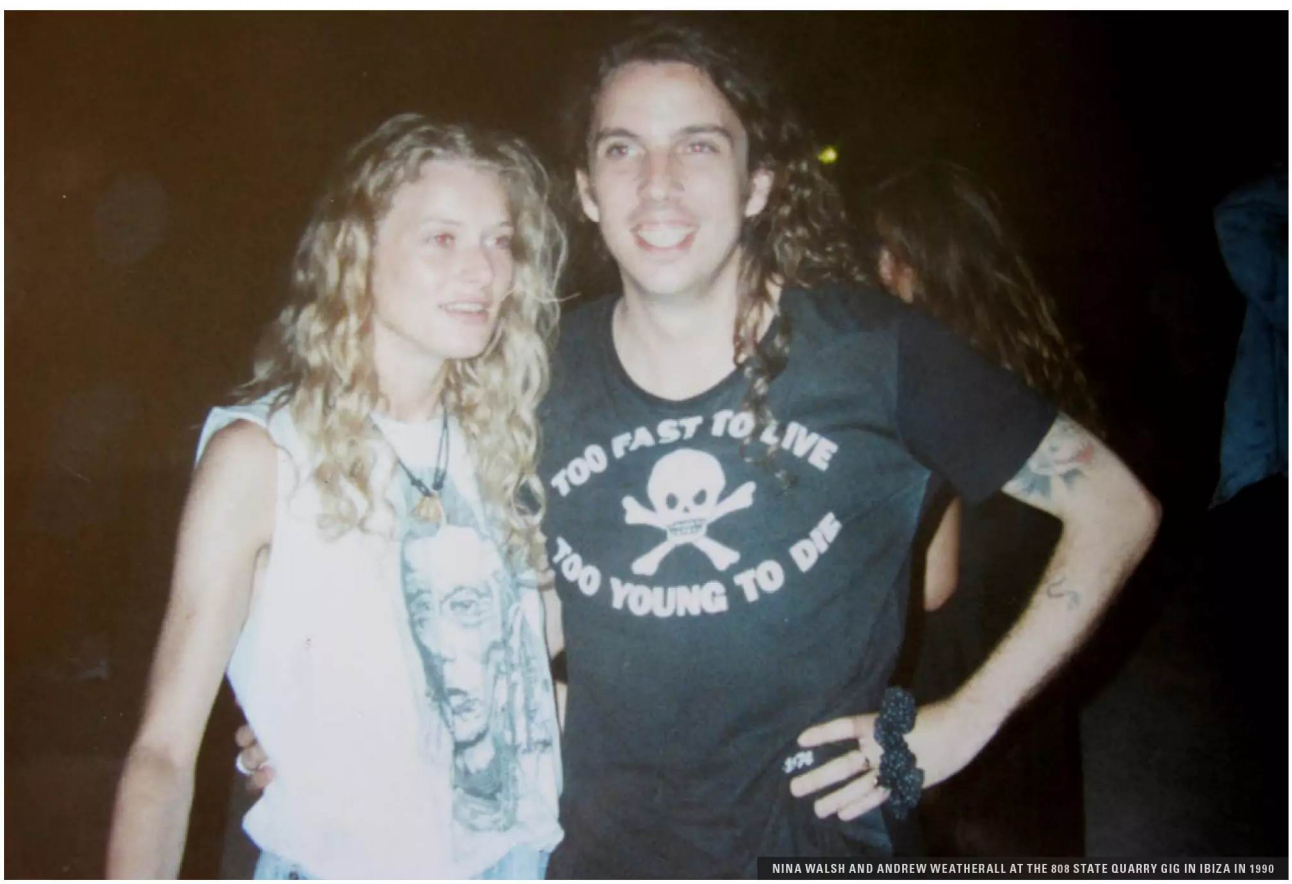
"We piled into this club full of guys dancing seriously to 70s soul records and had a sword fight," adds Chris. "At one point, Nina was laying on the floor with somebody sprinkling Smarties over her. Danny comes in with two strobes, whacks one on top of each speaker, and starts playing acid house. We all went fucking bananas while the soul boys congregated at the bar. It was mental. Proper us and them. One of the locals tried to stab Danny while he was DJing. We were obviously having a much better time than they could even imagine was possible and they didn't know why. That was the problem with ecstasy. We looked so out of it and happy… and straight people couldn't deal with it."

April and May were so hectic, Nina had to round them up in her diary in a catch-up entry dated 26 June.

"I ended up on TV! '01 For London' popped up when I was at my mum's in Frimley and there I was with smiley stickers on my face dancing on a podium!! OOOPPPPS. I said nothing and luckily she didn't recognise me."

The catch-up also detailed the night Mr Nosey Parker rescued her from a bad trip.

"Last week was a warehouse party called Alyssum promoted by Steve Proctor and Johnny (Walker) was DJing. I won't forget that place. I freaked out so badly on acid. I only had half but it was strong! Everything became infernal and the whole place seemed to be crawling with emaciated bodies, slowly dropping one by one. Everything was rapidly pulsating. Even the music seemed satanic and twisted. Everything was mad. I went over to Mr Nosey Parker (Andrew) and he asked if I was alright. 'No I'm not.' He could see something was wrong so he sat down with me and his friend Paul McKee joined us. I knew that I needed to be with people but they all seemed to look like rotting corpses or evil clowns. I still had hold of Andrew's hand, which felt like a skeleton hand, but I couldn't let go.



NINA WALSH AND ANDREW WEATHERALL AT THE 808 STATE QUARRY GIG IN IBIZA IN 1990

"When Andrew left to return to the dancefloor, I was surrounded by this variety show of freaks, all doing their best to snap me out of it and make me laugh. It wasn't funny. Eventually Terry Farley and Paul McKee took me to the car and got my brother. When I saw him coming, I thought he was my executioner!! My entire body was shaking and they moved me into Craig's car and put some Van Morrison on the player but even that sounded distorted and WHOOOMPFFF EURGH ARRRR… I asked Craig to get Mr Nosey Parker back and as his long plastic nose appeared over the half-open car window something switched. I laughed. Van had been replaced by Bill Nelson and Andrew was coming back to Greencroft with us. Back in Hounslow, I was pretty shaken and unusually quiet and reflective, trying to make sense of what had just happened. The house woke up and Chris found Andrew and I quite innocently curled up under a blanket on his sofa. It took a while to really level off and I had learnt quite a big lesson!"

In May, Jimmy Jewell started Cloud Cuckoo Land upstairs at Nicky Holloway's The Trip, "basically tripping behind the decks, playing anything from The Electric Prunes to Ravi Shankar. I first met Andrew and Farley in a caravan at the Rockley Sands festival. I really got into the music Andrew was playing on cassettes and invited him to play The Trip. About three weeks later, I got nicked for cheque card fraud and my magic carpet ride literally ended overnight, so Andrew took my night over from me."

Nina's diary for 26 June continues:

"Last night was a fucking blinder! We started off going to Paul Oakenfold's Kaleidoscope. Dropped half a pill, which was out of this world, but the venue was a bit shit and too hot. It finished at 4.00am so we moved onto another of Proctor's warehouse doos, Brainstorm, and it was brilliant and a fantastic venue! Andrew and Farley were there and I really like Andrew, you know. We always have such a giggle together and he is very intelligent behind that plastic nose. We have read a lot of the same books – Huxley, Leary, etc. We spent a lot of time talking together and really getting to know each other. He introduced me to Paul Rutherford from Frankie and was telling me all about Boy's Own.

"We went upstairs for a dance and got into all kinds of silliness – mimes, characters, Sherlock and Watson! It was so much fun. I lay down on my back on the dancefloor with my eyes closed and I felt someone close to my face. I opened my eyes and Andrew was there and we kissed. 'That was really lovely,' he said, so we did it again before returning to our silliness. This is a very different connection to anyone else I have ever met. We went downstairs to get a drink and bumped into Craig. He told Craig that he was 'falling in love with his sister and did he mind?'. When it was time to leave, he said to me that he had had a really top night thanks to me and said that I was 'the most snoggable girl in the club' and we kissed again."

Nina and Mr Nosey Parker became official after "Andrew phoned the next day and he invited me to see Prince at Wembley for my birthday," says Nina. "How could I say no? Quite classy, wasn't it?" It's fair to say they clicked. "Yes, instantly! I thought he was the funniest man I'd ever met."

Nina and Andrew bonded through relentless humour, musical discovery and chemically enhanced shenanigans (although the night he decided he was Jim Morrison scared her). The pair followed Danny and Jenni Rampling as an acid revolution power couple, sometimes in matching outfits as they ignited the lifelong relationship that would charge the summer of love's aftershock with punk attitude and lead to founding the era's coolest record labels.

Starting college happened to clash with Nina's increased activity on the acid house frontline, with Shoom joined by Future, Spectrum and events like the chaotic Shoom On The Farm in the Surrey countryside. And adding to life's general weirdness, Nina got a job operating Sweep on 'The Sooty Show'. Even now she can reduce men of a certain age to genuflecting awe with the original puppet that Matthew Corbett gifted her after she removed her hand from Sweep's arse until his 2023 comeback on the 'Into The Cosmic Hutch' podcast.

Kris Needs' 'Punkadelic! Nina Walsh's Dambusting Roller Coaster With Andrew Weatherall And Beyond' will be published early next year

STEPPING UP

Andy McCluskey and Paul Humphreys of Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark are still coming up with the goods 45 years in. Their new album, 'Bauhaus Staircase', a glorious collision of hook-laden electropop and artistic sentiment, finds the synth pioneers in perfect sync

WORDS: MAT SMITH
PICTURES: ED MILES

Andy McCluskey and I are discussing AI, which feels like a fairly logical segue after we've covered some of the contemporary sociopolitical themes that appear in the lyrics of 'Bauhaus Staircase', Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark's 14th studio album.

"We've been asked a lot about that this time round," he says, with a deflated sigh. "As far as I can see, in the foreseeable future, no algorithm could create a process that will write proper songs. They're always going to be pastiches, because they've analysed something that's already been done."

He pauses for a moment, giving a little smile before wryly offering a typically appropriate observation.

"I mean, it's like most bands of our age trying to write new albums," he says. "Quite frankly, it feels as if they've done it by asking AI, 'What chords do we normally use?' or 'What electronic sounds do we usually use in our songs?'. Sorry, I'm being cruel, but I think it's probably fair."

This isn't a charge that can be levelled at 'Bauhaus Staircase'. It's undoubtedly recognisable as an Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark album. All of the OMD staples are here in abundance – the trademark choral sample, clever lyrics, big choruses, electronic pop largesse – but it's also resolutely fresh and modern. There is no sense that McCluskey and his OMD partner Paul Humphreys are simply going through the motions, even though, 45 years after the band was founded, they'd be more than entitled to.

"There wasn't really pressure to make an album with 'Bauhaus Staircase'," offers Humphreys. "But there *was* pressure to make a good album. We've always had high standards, from the very beginning. We've never wanted to release a record that was purely branding for the next tour – we want to put out a record we are proud of. That's always where the pressure comes from."

'The Punishment Of Luxury', the last OMD album, was released in 2017. Although it was well-received by critics and fans, Humphreys admits to being completely exhausted by the promotion and touring in the wake of its release.

"We're acutely aware of our age and energy levels," he says. "We're not kids anymore."

Both McCluskey and Humphreys are now in their mid-60s. Despite not looking their age or betraying any signs of wear and tear, they can be forgiven for not being prepared to come off tour and immediately throw themselves back into recording like they could in the 1980s. After 'The Punishment Of Luxury', there was no real plan or urgency to do anything else.

And then the 2020 lockdown arrived. McCluskey spent the time at home in Liverpool, while Humphreys and his wife relaxed in France. Let's just say that maybe they were a little *too* relaxed.

"All of a sudden, we were pregnant," he laughs. "We went to the local pharmacy and bought a whole pile of pregnancy tests, and they were all positive. So I was dealing with all that stuff, and then Andy called me and said, 'Paul, I'm really, really bored. Have you got any ideas I could work on?'."

"There was nothing to do," adds McCluskey. "It was like being a teenager when my mother was watching a programme on TV I didn't want to watch. I would go to my room and do something else. That was exactly what it was like."

This was virgin territory for the duo. Everything they'd done before had been made in a studio together.

"The biggest challenge in writing music in OMD is actually getting Paul to deliver something," jokes McCluskey. "It takes forever to get anything out of him. There are tumbleweeds in Paul's computer waiting for him to do some work. At least when he's with me, I can say, 'Get back in that room and write something!'. There is a genuine spark when we write together. There always has been and always will be."

In his efforts to appease McCluskey's abject boredom, Humphreys alighted on some hard drives in a drawer, many of which hadn't been touched for a decade. The drives contained kernels of ideas he and McCluskey had worked on, material intended for a second album by Onetwo (his synthpop project with Propaganda's Claudia Brücken) and unused solo work written for adverts.

"I found myself sitting in my room, waiting for Bad Santa Humphreys to drop me any kind of toy with broken wheels to work with," recalls McCluskey. "Fortunately, one of the first things he sent was the outline of 'Look At You Now', which he gave me on the day he told me his wife was expecting a baby. I think I only got it because he wrote it for an advert for his wife's perfume company and she rejected it. I then had to work my magic on it and turn it into what it became – an OMD song."

It was the first step on their 'Bauhaus Staircase'.

The next backing track Humphreys sent over evolved into 'Anthropocene', one of the standout moments on 'Bauhaus Staircase'. The song can be traced back to classics like 'Enola Gay', where a terrifying subject – in this case, humankind's impact on the Earth and a grim prognosis for our eventual self-inflicted demise – is set to danceable electronics. 'Anthropocene' features a continuation of McCluskey's interest in text-to-speech tools, which he'd explored on 'The Punishment Of Luxury', and on 'Genetic Engineering' 40 years earlier.

"I'd been wanting to write a song called 'Anthropocene' for a while," explains McCluskey. "I'd had two goes at it, which weren't working. Once I put the text-to-speech on it, I played my son the old version and Paul's version and he went, 'Dad, it's a no-brainer. Don't even think about yours. Paul's music is much better'."

Despite not being in the same room, and the distraction afforded by Humphreys' impending fatherhood, the pair found a working rhythm not too dissimilar to their usual process. Ideas would be initiated in the studio and then get worked on by McCluskey afterwards.

"The songs almost always come to life on my computer," he says. "People make an incorrect assumption that I do the words and Paul does the music, but we both do the music. What helps these days is, because we're not in the same room, we now have identical twin ProTools systems. I can send Paul the complete file and he's got all the soft synth plugins. We'd always rather be in the same room, but that wasn't an option this time. In the end, out of necessity, we found a process that really worked for this album."

At once unfathomable, artistic and wilfully inscrutable, it's hard to think of a title more suited to OMD than 'Bauhaus Staircase'. Its reference to the Bauhaus school's adventurous modernist architectural innovation also nods gently in the direction of 1981's 'Architecture & Morality', the band's landmark third album.

"It's been a tradition of ours to have bonkers, unusual titles," admits Humphreys. "When we came up with 'Architecture & Morality', we saw it as a description of the way the band works. We saw the 'architecture' as the bare bones of our music, in a very structured way, and the 'morality' was all the beauty over the top."

"I'm the artist and Paul's the electrician," agrees McCluskey. "It's two more ways in which we're very different from each other. I was supposed to go to Leeds to do a fine art degree, but the band started in 1978 and I never went. I would have been there with Marc Almond and Dave Ball from Soft Cell, and Green Gartside from Scritti Politti. It was the place to be… except I wasn't there.

"The album's title comes from a wonderfully evocative 1931 painting by Bauhaus artist and designer Oskar Schlemmer, created in response to the news that the school was closing due to the totalitarian grip of the Nazi Party.

I'm a huge fan of early to mid-20th century art. The song 'Bauhaus Staircase' is not a history lesson, although it has several references to Josef and Anni Albers, who both taught at the Bauhaus. It's really just a metaphor for the strength and power of art."

Bands don't often make music like this – where smart artistic ideas collide perfectly with accessible, hooky and memorable pop sensibilities – but OMD have always done it. It's a trait that means this album remains comfortably outside of musical norms – faithful to their myriad accomplishments, yet still indicating they can find plenty of new things to write songs about.

"We've always found crazy ideas to make songs out of," explains Humphreys. "We've never been a traditional band. We do have our share of love songs, but not many, and they're very personal. When we started, we set out to slay the rock 'n' roll dragon and get rid of all those love song cliches. We just wanted to bring in subjects we were fascinated by and interested in, and we've stayed true to those roots. I think you can trace it back to the blueprint of Kraftwerk. They didn't make love songs, unless they were about trains."

Humphreys cites the example of 'Stanlow' from their 1980 second album, 'Organisation'. 'Stanlow' is a fragile, haunting, wonderfully romantic song. Its subject? The oil refinery at Stanlow, where McCluskey's father worked. The illuminated sight of the refinery complex on the way back from performing their early gigs signalled that they were nearly home.

For 'Bauhaus Staircase', McCluskey found the source material for the album's beatific, tender moments in more traditional places.

"Love makes the world go round," he says, deadly serious. "Love is the most powerful force on the planet for human beings, so it 's appropriate to write songs about it. One thing that we did learn during the pandemic is the capacity for human beings to be kind and empathetic, which I thought was wonderful.

"There are several songs on this album which are, effectively, audio hugs. It's me saying to people, 'I know times are hard, but I love you, so here's a hug. You're gonna be OK'. I subsequently had to beg the two people I wrote those songs for to let me put them on the album. They are songs for people I really, really cared about."

Within the standout song 'Aphrodite's Favourite Child', McCluskey leans into that idea to yield one of the finest metaphors he has ever put into song.

"It's brutal, but it's the most passionate lyric I've ever written," he says. "'Hold me like a mother holds her only dying child' – it's a way of saying, 'I love the way you make me feel' in a completely non-cliched way. Don't ask me where the line came from. It's that feeling of somebody giving you every ounce of love they have. We definitely needed that in lockdown."

Dropped casually in at the end of the press release for 'Bauhaus Staircase' is a quote from McCluskey: "I'm comfortable if this is OMD's last statement." It gives rise to the frightening notion of this being the band's final album.

On this topic, both McCluskey and Humphreys are realistic, and both indicate that they would only consider writing another album if they could achieve the same high watermark they've always aimed for. It echoes a statement written by Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius in his manifesto, 'What Is Architecture?' (1919): "Ideas die as soon as they become compromises."

"Paul and I were joking yesterday that the hardest thing to do is to write the topline vocal melodies," says McCluskey. "An instrumental album would be a lot easier. Maybe we'll do that next.

"It's a really good time to be Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark. People say very nice things about us – that we're cool and influential and iconic. So the last thing you want to do is screw it all up by dropping a crap album after 45 years. It's not easy doing good songs, you know. But it's dead easy to do shit ones."

'Bauhaus Staircase' is out now on 100 Percent

STICK IT OUT

What do you get if you bring together ex-Cure drummer Lol Tolhurst, former Siouxsie And The Banshees sticksman Budgie and uber-producer Jacknife Lee? An exploratory and brilliantly inventive "electronic head-fuck", that's what

WORDS: STEPHEN DALTON

Los Angeles has long been a magnet for exiled musicians in the autumn of their career, a rock 'n' roll Bournemouth but with better weather, a no-man's land where time stands still and vintage Harley-riding rockers never die. But LA is also the laboratory city where musicians collide and converge, explore and experiment, reinvent and reboot. Behind the Sunset Strip cliches, the post-punk ethos of permanent musical revolution still thrives here in the shadows.

'Los Angeles' is also the name of the debut collaborative album by a new pan-generational supergroup featuring Cure co-founder Lol Tolhurst, former Siouxsie And The Banshees drummer Peter "Budgie" Clarke, who has worked with everyone from The Slits to John Grant, and Irish super-producer Garret "Jacknife" Lee, whose stellar portfolio includes U2, Taylor Swift, REM, Cathal Coughlan and The Killers. Loaded with famous guests – from Primal Scream frontman Bobby Gillespie, James Murphy of LCD Soundsystem and U2 guitarist The Edge to harpist Mary Lattimore and experimental folk artist Lonnie Holley – this groove-heavy electro-rock epic is a vast, ungainly sprawl of noises and voices, punk-funk beats and avant-pop soundscapes. A kaleidoscopic cubist portrait of a sprawling post-modern metropolis, the album is personal to its three creators, who all have strong connections to the city.

"Los Angeles is home to me," says Lee down the line from his home studio in Topanga Canyon, on LA's rustic mountain fringes. "There's still a sense that it's crazy that a city this size is only 100 years old. I think there are eight million people or something here. So if you want it to work like a normal city, it won't. But it's still an 'unwritten rule' kind of place."

"Jacknife's lived out here a while," says Tolhurst, a fellow long-term resident who moved to LA in 1994. "I've been here almost 30 years – I've lived longer in Los Angeles than I've lived anywhere my whole life. And Budgie's spent a considerable amount of time here. So this is really where the album was conceived."

"I've been kind of aiming for LA since Siouxsie and I split," adds Budgie. "It wasn't planned – I just thought this is where I have the most friends outside the band, which had already folded. But then my best plans were quashed and I ended up in Berlin with the most wonderful person, who's now my wife, and we have two young children."

Tolhurst and Budgie have been friends for over 40 years. The Cure and the Banshees share a long history together, with Robert Smith even playing in both bands for a spell. The pair had long discussed collaborating, but their first joint album comes at the end of a long and winding road. This alt-rock supergroup took five years, multiple wrong turns, long pandemic delays and a colourful chorus of background characters as it slouched towards Los Angeles to be born.

They first agreed to try working together over breakfast in December 2018 after both appeared on Joe Wong's long-running podcast 'The Trap Set', which specialises in interviews with drummers. The embryonic project's first incarnation also featured Bauhaus percussionist Kevin Haskins.

"Kevin has lived here for a long time as well," says Tolhurst. "So we decided, instead of The Three Tenors, we would be The Three Drummers."

Budgie has a less flattering comparison.

"I called it 'Last Of The Summer Wine' meets 'Top Gear'," he quips. "Only it wasn't about cars."

Tolhurst and Budgie initially enlisted an unknown female singer, with Nine Inch Nails' Danny Lohner as producer. One of their earliest sessions took place at Mötley Crüe drummer Tommy Lee's home studio, which is attached to his high-security mansion.

"All drummers are friends – that's the golden rule," nods Tolhurst. "I know Tommy because back in the 80s, his band Mötley Crüe, Madonna and The Cure all did the same circuit for a whole summer."

When Tolhurst called Lee to book his studio, the heavy-rock tub-thumper agreed, offering some sage advice…

"Don't bother to bring any drums. I have a shitload of them."

As Budgie settled in to clobbering away on Lee's super-sized Pearl drum set-up ("the Rolls-Royce of kits"), their superstar host would sporadically pop in to check out the sessions.

"Tommy was looking a little wistful," says Tolhurst.

"I think he wanted to be there," grins Budgie. "But he was getting busy for Mötley Crüe."

With a female singer on board, the band began to take a slightly more conventionally goth-rock industrial direction. Pretty soon, that felt like a dead end.

"It sounded like you would expect The Cure, the Banshees and Bauhaus melded together to sound, with the guitarist from Nine Inch Nails producing," shrugs Tolhurst. "It was OK, but we're not really into doing something that was legacy. Because what's the point of that for us? I've done that before, and you can never win with that scenario – you'll always be compared. It will always sound too much like The Cure or not enough."

In late 2019, Haskins left the project to resume touring duties with Bauhaus. Budgie also returned to Europe to continue drumming for John Grant. When the worldwide Covid lockdowns prevented travel, the trio's early sessions were mostly shelved, although some were repurposed by The Mission frontman Wayne Hussey on his charity single 'TOS2020', an all-star reworking of 'Tower Of Strength' designed to raise money for frontline workers globally.

"It wasn't easy, because we had done a lot of work," recalls Budgie. "But we had to pull the plug not knowing what we were going to do next."

Unsure about how to progress with their stalled project, Tolhurst turned to Lee, but the producer was initially unimpressed by the band's early efforts.

"As a fan, I thought, 'That's not really what I wanted to hear'," says Lee. "You know, it's missing the point slightly. It was fine – professionally recorded drums, a woman singing… It was Nine Inch Nails-y, I guess. It's strange in the States – there's a very different perception of the Banshees and The Cure than there is in Europe. The goth, industrial, body music thing seems to dominate here. I don't think the US got the romantic thing from goth music. It ended up getting very muscular and Nine Inch Nails… angry-man energy."

Lee's advice to Tolhurst and Budgie was blunt – rip it up and start again. Despite being 10 years younger, the producer was well-versed in their back catalogues. In fact, his first grown-up gig experience was a Siouxsie And The Banshees show. He encouraged them to drop the goth-rock cliches and rediscover their more experimental post-punk roots.

"I had to remind them they were drummers – that was the first thing," says Lee. "For me, the problem with those two guys is that I was more interested in them than I was in their singers, even though I had a crush on Siouxsie. You know, I found the lyrics a bit spooky, but I was more interested in the noises being made. So I just wanted to get back to that moment of discovery."

The trio began to formulate a new musical approach during long chats, listening sessions and exploratory jams at Lee's home studio in Topanga Canyon. They discussed their shared formative love for Can, Neu!, Kraftwerk, Moebius and Roedelius, Eno and Fripp – that whole radiant pantheon of 1970s krautrock and groundbreaking analogue synthtronica.

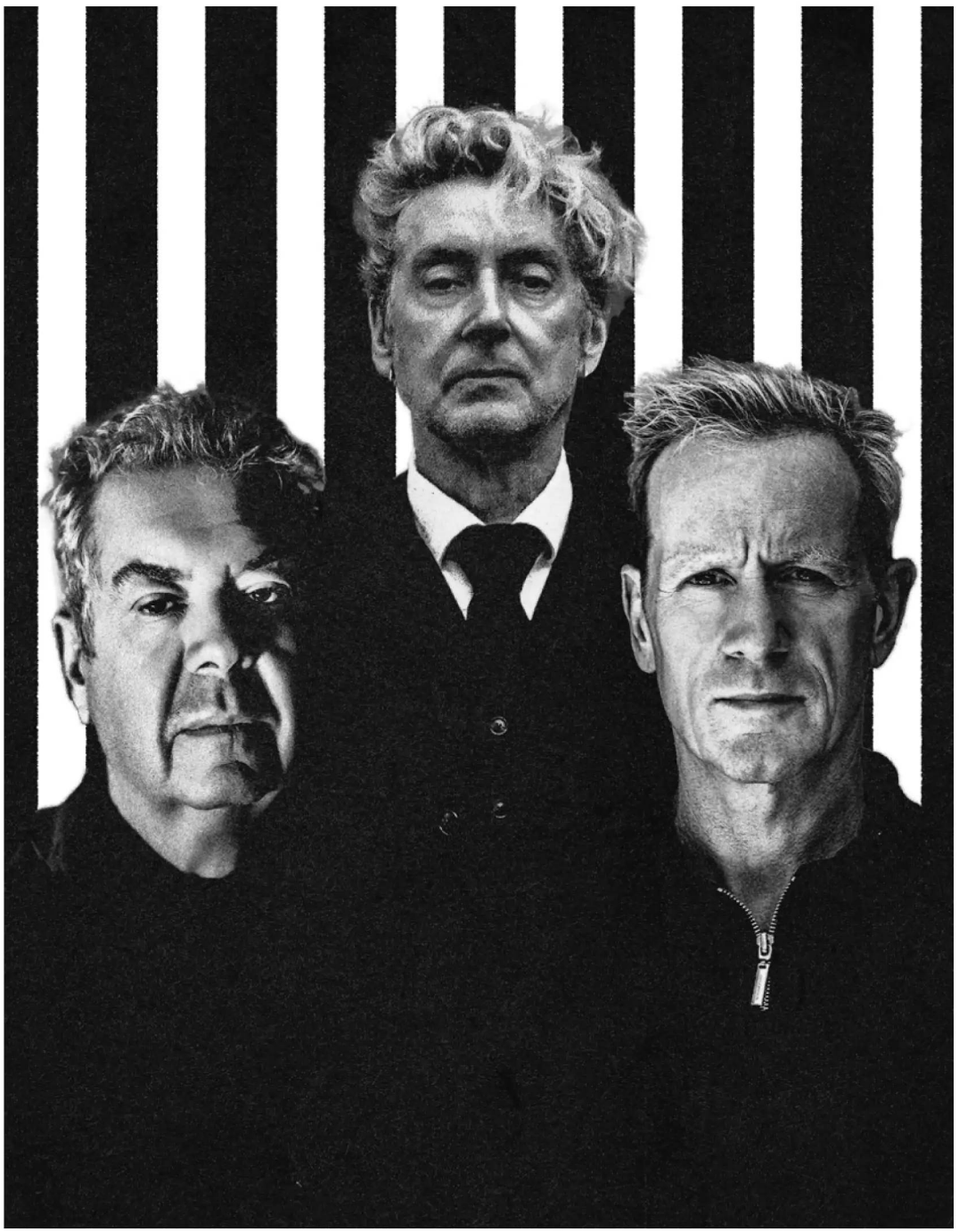
"All the greats of beats and synths," nods Budgie. "Lol's heavily into his Buchlas and Moogs and stuff. So when it didn't work out with Kevin Haskins, we really thought this was our chance to do something we've always liked but perhaps never had the opportunity to explore."

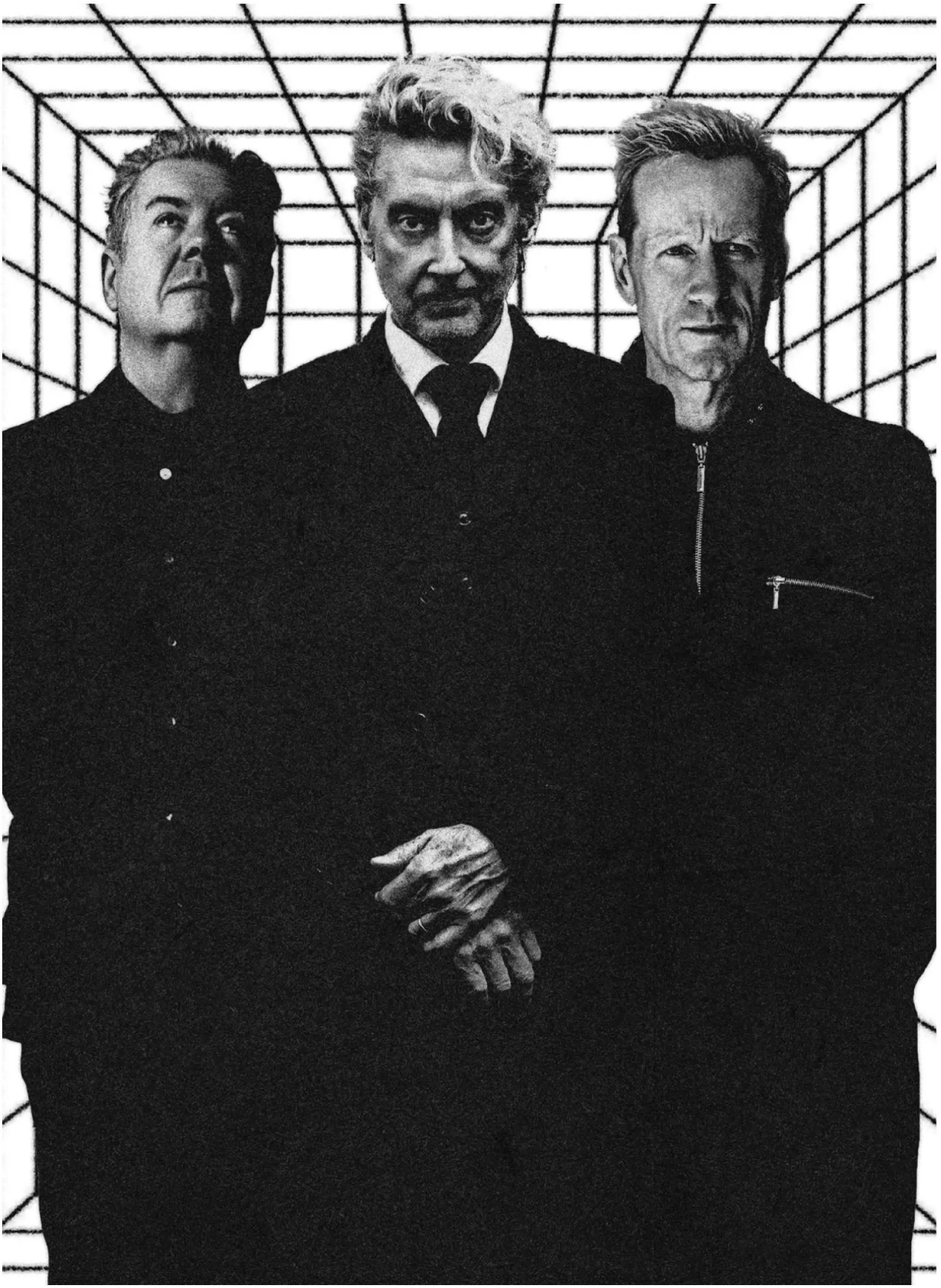
Indeed, Lee essentially acted as an Eno-like creative catalyst to Tolhurst and Budgie, forcing them to take risks, pushing them to push themselves. He pointed out to Budgie that the most interesting Banshees album was their 2004 B-sides and rarities boxset, 'Downside Up', largely because it was put together with zero commercial pressure.

"That was how I wanted to approach this – just start making noise, and I'll engage with my editor brain later," says Lee. "Once you begin to think too much about music, it gets a little problematic. The Creatures [Siouxsie and Budgie's side-project] recorded quickly, because they never had the time. Budgie would tell me – it was very haphazard. You're in a state of panic, fear and giddiness. That's the optimal headspace to be in to make music."

The 'Los Angeles' album evolved from these sessions, with Tolhurst on synths, percussion and found sounds, including wooden teeth he picked up at his local junk store, and Budgie playing drums, keyboards, harmonica and more. Lee jumped in on multiple instruments, reworking the tracks alone overnight, electronically manipulating tempo and texture.

"It was a very natural, organic way of making music," says Tolhurst. "We would walk into the other room and start playing. It was like when I started with The Cure. From the age of 16 to 19, we didn't really leave Robert's house.





We didn't play anywhere. We spent three days a week, three hours each night, just rehearsing. Robert's parents built this extra room on their house. I think they thought they'd use it for Christmas and stuff, but we just put the drums in. That was our 10,000 hours."

By early 2020, the three seemed on course to make an instrumental album in classic krautrock supergroup mode. But the focus shifted again when they decided to invite a few friends to sing and play on some of the tracks. That turned into a torrent of guests, with James Murphy's "throat shredder" title track giving the album its umbrella theme, while Bobby Gillespie's politically charged lyrics helped shape the loose motif of multiple takes on Los Angeles.

"It was Bobby who really kickstarted it in a new direction," says Budgie. "Jacknife knew James Murphy, and Lol had met him too, and I'd just been out with John Grant and met James backstage at T In The Park. Bobby and I met when I was out with John at some Swedish festival – we'd known each other for years but never had a full conversation, certainly not one we could remember… ha! So it wasn't too strange to ask them to contribute."

In October 2021, Tolhurst and Budgie launched their own podcast, 'Curious Creatures', a post-punk platform featuring interviews with friends and fellow musicians, including Shirley Manson, Tim Burgess, Miki Berenyi and James Murphy.

"There was a point where we were going to maybe call the whole band thing Curious Creatures," says Tolhurst. "But then we thought our names by themselves are much better-known than that."

Budgie recalls that after toying with various alternatives, the trio decided to use their own names, "but write it in that cool way everyone does now, with kisses in between, ha!"

So they now sound like a firm of hipster solicitors.

"I think all the best bands do," laughs Budgie.

Fatefully, 'Los Angeles' arrives during a bumper comeback year for the veteran post-punk generation. Tolhurst and Budgie are resurfacing just as their former collaborators Siouxsie and The Cure are earning rapturous reviews for their latest sold-out comeback shows. Although Budgie didn't see his ex-wife and long-time musical partner play on her recent tour, he still talks fondly of "Madame Siouxsie" during our interview. Tolhurst had a famously bitter falling-out with Robert Smith back in 1989, but they are on more cordial terms these days.

"I went to see The Cure because they came to play here," he explains. "And it was kind of like going back to the pub in 1977 for me. Which was nice, because I got to see a lot of people I hadn't seen for years. I've known Robert since he was five years old. If you know anybody for 60 years, they're family, right? And you know how your family is – sometimes it's great, sometimes it's less than great. But mostly we're still family. You know, we're still together."

Tolhurst says working with Budgie feels like a "third act" in both their careers after several low-key decades of family life, raising kids and sporadic side projects.

"There's life in the old dog yet!" he laughs. "I'm not convincing anybody I'm the oldest teenager in town. That's not going to happen. But it's better because now we have a clear head – we have clear ideas about who we are."

After 'Los Angeles', the trio are already planning two more albums. Lol Tolhurst says another "very famous percussionist" has already signed on for the second album, but declines to name names. Meanwhile, he and Budgie are currently working on a live show for 2024, with guest-heavy big-venue gigs planned alongside more DIY "suitcase shows", where the duo "throw a bunch of electronic stuff in a box". They're still pushing the envelope, keeping the experimental post-punk spirit alive. Whether Jacknife Lee will join them on tour is still under negotiation.

"Jacknife will come for some things," reveals Tolhurst. "But he's got a whole other career in production. He's sensible. He doesn't really like months of living out of a suitcase. But me and Budgie, we're road dogs. Show us the highway. Let's go!"

'Los Angeles' is out now on Play It Again Sam

PROTO PUNK

Rooted in fervent, free-form experimentation, Martin Rev's formative 1970s cassette sonics not only fed into the arch-provocateur's work with influential New York synth-punksters Suicide, but also his distinctive solo oeuvre. With a new release of archive recordings, he reflects on those gritty early years

WORDS: KRIS NEEDS

'The Sum Of Our Wounds (Cassette Recordings 1973-85)' interrupts the systematic reissuing of Martin Rev's nine-LP solo catalogue by Hamburg label Bureau B, to present a frequently mind-blowing selection from his mountainous archive. On a late September afternoon in New York City, the former Suicide keyboard magus is playing through a test pressing, trying to pinpoint the earliest tracks and the first showings of his Seeburg Rhythm Prince drum machine. Along with Alan Vega's vocal extrapolations and Rev's searing circuit rumpus, it's the third key element in the trailblazing sound that blueprinted so many aspects of electronic music.

Despite having interviewed Rev countless times since Suicide were attracting untold abuse for supporting The Clash 45 years ago, it's still fascinating (and somewhat surreal) for this long-time fan to hear him rifling through his early sonic sketches, trying to place their creation. On 'She's Back', for instance, the coruscating fanfare of drones and alien greenhouse whizz-bangs swelling to primal catharsis is devoid of any drum machine pulses. Surely it dates from Suicide's wall-of-sound era before Rev bought his drum machine for $30 from a couple in Queens whose 19-year-old daughter had used it to accompany her poetry.

"They told me she had recently committed suicide," he recalls.

That was in early 1975, but far from predating it, Rev declares that 'She's Back' is "actually later", crushing my theory with a chuckle.

"I took on a studio in the early 80s and recorded just using the equipment they had there… but there was no rhythm machine on this one."

The fizzing loungecore of 'Yearning', he says, can be dated to "around the time I just got the machine".

Still searching for the oldest cut, I mention the primitive woodblock sashay of 'Skateboard' conjuring "some kind of electronic Moondog", which prompts Rev's memories of seeing the fabled Viking of Sixth Avenue in the 1960s.

"That's early, and obviously there's a drum machine… unless I had something before the Suicide drum machine, but I don't think I did," he muses. "With some of these, I probably conceived the melody lines in 1973. The cassettes might have been recorded a little after, when I had a machine around."

Remembering the new set's title, Rev laughs.

"But what can we do at this point?"

Whenever it was recorded, such was Rev's uniquely idiosyncratic approach to developing tracks, they all sound like arcane pointers to a distant future in a parallel universe. These blueprints and doodles have nestled in his archive since they were overtaken in the creative process by subsequent versions on studio reel-to-reels.

"The album is actually an idea that Bureau B had a year or two ago," he explains. "I must have mentioned these cassettes in a conversation, but I wasn't planning to put them out… or maybe I said we could do it sometime. The reality comes when they ask if *they* can put them out! They said there was real demand for that kind of stuff. I hear that all the time, like when they wanted us to go back and play early Suicide on the original instruments. There was a trend for that kind of thing, but it didn't work for me internally to do it. Of course, these tracks were not yet titled when we didn't have a deal and couldn't release anything, so I guess they are – as it says – my sketches."

After Bureau B's Daniel Jahn, who has steered and annotated Rev's reissues so far, persisted with the archive idea, it occurred to Rev that these old recordings could also be integrated into the new album he's been working on for the last few years.

"I started going through my cassettes and digitising them, getting out the best parts and throwing them into the album I'm working on now," he says. "It was another of those rocket ship propulsion things – another stage going at a different velocity. The day after I told him I was copying them, he gave me such an incredible response that I was blown away. That was the gestation."

As some tracks were quite lengthy, Rev suggested Jahn edit them down.

"There was a lot of stuff, and I'm working on other things," he explains. "I don't want to spend the bulk of my time going back into my own history, which for me is less fascinating than the present. After a while, Daniel said he'd gone through them and it was gonna be incredible. He sent me his choices and sequence, and I could tell he was really into it. It has a thing of its own, like a new album the way it's sequenced, although I didn't play anything new. Daniel deserves a lot of credit for his enthusiasm in getting behind it."

Among the grainy clips and skeletal try-outs, some are recognisable from later manifestations on Suicide records or Rev's early solo albums. Most startling is 'Dreams', a previously unheard instrumental incarnation of Suicide's timeless 'Dream Baby Dream', released on 12-inch in 1979 as a bridge between the debut album and the following year's glistening 'Suicide: Alan Vega And Martin Rev'.

"That's not necessarily the first version of 'Dream Baby Dream'," begins Rev as the track's spirit-hoisting optimism roars behind him. "That's something I was playing with at home pretty early. I think this is from the early Red Star days. When we were cutting the first album, [Red Star founder] Marty Thau had some extra studio time and still wanted to do some mixing. Alan [Vega] wasn't going to come in, so I cut this track. As far as the vocal went, the very first was 'Keep Your Dreams' before 'Dream Baby Dream'. We put it on the 45 for the jukebox at Max's Kansas City – it preceded the 'Suicide' album by a year or two – and we convinced Marty we could record actual songs. Later, 'Dream Baby Dream' came about in the studio, and Marty hit us up about cutting with Ric Ocasek, because he really wanted to produce us. That's when we went in for one night and cut 'Dream Baby Dream', as it's known now, with 'Radiation' on the back."

Recorded in the limbo period just before ZE Records and the second Suicide album at Sorcerer Sound on Mercer Street, Rev's self-titled 1980 first solo album is represented by alternative versions of the guttural bubblegum vocal mutant 'Baby O Baby', a xylophone-tickled 'Temptation', the tolling bell haze of 'Asia', and the joyously sparkling 'Mari'. The last of these, which opened the original LP, was written in homage to his wife and lifelong muse – and Suicide's original drummer – who sadly passed away in 2008.

Released on Charles Ball's Lust/Unlust offshoot Infidelity, Rev says the set "reflects a kind of New York sound and the instrumental possibilities of pure sound I had uncovered through Suicide".

"There were a lot of mixes of that first album," he continues. "I've got boxes of two-track tapes, including about five of 'Baby O Baby', most of them instrumental. I don't know if anyone wants to hear more versions of 'Baby O Baby' and 'Mari', but I'm told people love that stuff."

'Martin Rev' is currently lined up for its long-awaited Bureau B reissue. New York Rocker's Roy Trakin described it on release as "particularly revelatory in capturing the man's left-field genius", and it still sounds fearlessly new 43 years later. Suicide's second LP from 1980 gave Rev the synths and momentum for starting his next solo album, 'Clouds Of Glory', in February 1981.

"I had this very clear visual idea for my next two albums," he explains. "'Clouds' was a natural progression from the second Suicide album. I used that Prophet-5 live for a while, which allowed me to get deeper into what could be done with it."

His main inspiration came from travelling across America, coast-to-coast.

"At the time, Mari and I were based between California and New York," he remembers. "I took one of those three-day Greyhound bus excursions, which was my chance to see America for the first time. It was incredible going through the deserts in Texas, Mexico and Arizona. I got this feeling of the American landscape I had in my mind as a child but never really saw. This expanse of terrain, landscape and all those new sensations greatly influenced my visual ideas relating to those journeys, using sounds I was getting on the new instruments.

"Marty Thau had extra studio time, and asked if I wanted to make a record with it, which we did until the studio time ran out. Most of everything was recorded, but it wasn't finalised or mixed – there was more to do. From there, he wanted to get a deal to complete the album in another studio. That took three years. He sold the record to New Rose in France, who gave me an advance, so we went into Blank Tapes and finished it. The guy at New Rose got upset that there were no vocals because they thought it was a second demo before they were recorded, but that was the record they signed."

The new collection's full pelt 'Laredo' is a pulsing wind-tunnel-in-hell blueprint for 'Rodeo' on 'Clouds Of Glory', presaging house music's 4/4 kick drum three years before Jesse Saunders released 'On And On'. Then there's the album's swooning doo-wop instrumental 'Whisper', here with Rev's original and suitably low-key vocals. It could be a prototype for 'Surrender', from Suicide's 'A Way Of Life' from 1988, but Rev maintains it's a separate song in the grand tradition of his beloved doo-wop groups, who often used near-identical melodies. There hangs a tale…

Thau had taken a tape of the instrumental to former New York Dolls singer David Johansen's place one day as they were buddies (he'd once managed them) and wanted to play it to him.

"I think he wanted to pitch him to do a vocal," says Rev. "David said he dug the song, and we should call it 'Whisper', so Marty told me we had a title and an idea for lyrics that he started speaking to me over the phone. They were close to what I did but based on that idea. I wanted to get that in because I missed adding Marty's songwriting credit.

"Marty called me after he heard 'Surrender' on 'A Way Of Life', very upset because he said I'd ripped off 'Whisper'. I told him they're both songs I wrote, and if you listen to each one, they're different from each other. I didn't rip myself off – but if I did, so what? 'Surrender' and 'Whisper' are not the same song, but of course they relate to each other. That [doo-wop] world is part of me, so sure it's gonna come out."

After this initially reluctant but ultimately rewarding dip into his past, Rev continues to work on the new album that's occupied him since 2017's 'Demolition 9'.

"The light's starting to come through what it really is for me in its entirety," he says.

The set may even surface around the time that Rev's 'New York Music City' biography, which I'll be writing, appears next year. Meanwhile, 'The Sum Of Our Wounds' can only keep devotees of his never-ending musical journey – and Suicide's towering legacy – on their toes and, in my case, on the trail of that drum machine. It's still touching to hear Rev's initial reason for considering electronic drums – he couldn't contemplate replacing Mari with another human as Suicide's drummer.

"No way I was going to replace her!" affirms the amiable Rev with a laugh. "I had to go home and wouldn't be able to face her. Not that she was counting on that so much anyway, as she had plenty to do. It just didn't feel right. I got this vision when I was walking around and remembered drum machines, so the reason then became musical. I heard the spatial aspect and a whole different dynamic. At that point, I was still doing tracks like 'Rocket USA' and 'Cheree' without any drums. When I put the machine in, it felt like we had something… this electronic world was so incredible."

'The Sum Of Our Wounds (Cassette Recordings 1973-85)' is out now on Bureau B

OUT OF HER SHELL

It's 35 years since Emma Anderson formed shoegaze behemoths Lush, but her new album 'Pearlies' is her first solo record proper. As both a paean to independence and a work of darkly beautiful psychedelic pop, it's a triumph. What's on her mind these days?

WORDS: BOB FISCHER
PICTURES: BRIAN DAVID STEVENS

"Are you going to ask me about weird 1970s childhood TV?" says Emma Anderson, entirely out of the blue. "Because I know you're really into all that."

Sometimes, it seems, one's reputation precedes oneself. Go on then, let's do this. What were the programmes that terrified her as a young girl?

"'The Stone Tape'," she replies without hesitation. "I had a TV in my bedroom when I was a kid. Not because I was a spoiled brat, but because I wasn't really allowed to watch it with my mum and dad. I had a very odd upbringing. But that meant I could watch the telly until all hours, and I was absolutely petrified by 'The Stone Tape'. I just remember the ending, with the lights… it's Jane Asher, isn't it? Not long ago, I watched it on YouTube, and it's actually not that scary. But, as a child, I was badly affected by it."

She wasn't alone, I tell her. Nigel Kneale's notorious 1972 BBC drama depicts an electronic research team haunted by the psychic echoes of violent, historical deaths embedded in the walls of their Victorian-built headquarters. It terrified *everyone*, despite a somewhat incongruous subplot about a revolutionary type of washing machine being developed by the boss from 'Terry And June'.

"Ah," she says, looking a bit bemused. "Sorry, I fast-forwarded it to the end."

This might feel like a curious entry point for a conversation about Emma's excellent new record, 'Pearlies'. But the weird disquiet of her 1970s youth and the resulting charms of 21st century hauntology were, she reveals, discussed in early planning sessions with the album's producer, James "Maps" Chapman. With its tootling Farfisa organs and shuddering theremins, 'Pearlies' has the hallucinatory ambience of some strange, psychedelic childhood flying dream, swooping over frost-coated woods and waving at pipe-playing fauns watching 'The Clangers' on their own portable tellies.

"I did talk to James about all that stuff," she says. "And about some of those artists. Do you know Baron Mordant, of Mordant Music? He was a dad from my daughter's school and he lived next door to me. He's a bit of that ilk, isn't he? And have you heard of Concretism? I like his stuff too."

Blimey, yes. Chris Sharp, from Essex. He makes beautiful electronic music inspired by his early memories of the 1980s Cold War. Although his last release, 'The Thetford Beast', was about a shaggy folkloric monster stalking the woodlands of Norfolk.

"I first came across him on Twitter," says Emma. "Someone put up a clip about brutalist architecture and said, 'What is this music?'. And it was so brilliant. It wasn't on Spotify, and you couldn't Shazam it, but someone else said, 'Oh, it's Concretism'."

Has she heard of Warrington-Runcorn New Town Development Plan as well, I wonder? He's made whole albums dedicated to town planning and the thwarted utopian visions of 1970s brutalist architecture.

"I have, because I remember the name!" she laughs. "Whenever I think of Warrington-Runcorn… one of my first jobs was working for the DHSS, basically paying people in the civil service their salaries. I had to write their names and National Insurance numbers on a massive pad. I was doing this in London, but they were then sent up to Warrington-Runcorn.

"And when I was younger, I remember thinking, 'What am I going to do when I'm older?'. And one of my ideas was to work in town planning. I've always been fascinated by the whole 'new town' thing."

So what was so "odd" about her upbringing? She takes a deep breath.

"God, I'm not sure we've got long enough. I grew up in central London, and my dad worked in one of those old boys' army clubs where women weren't allowed. It had big chairs, with old men drinking brandy. We lived in a flat just off Piccadilly, and I was there from the age of three to 15. It was quite a weird place for a child to grow up."

And was Emma the rebellious teenager, terrifying retired brigadiers with her outlandish music tastes?

"We didn't have a record player for years and years," she recalls. "But my mum was quite a heavy smoker, so we finally bought one from the catalogue with all the cigarette tokens she'd collected. I didn't have many records, and my mum and dad were older parents, so it was all Frankie Vaughan and Edith Piaf. But I had one of those little tape recorders with the buttons at the front, so I listened to The Beatles and Abba. Then, in my teenage years, I went off…"

She trails into laughter.

"I was into chart music first," she remembers. "But then you discover the bands in the lower reaches of the Top 40, and you think, 'These sound quite interesting'. I remember buying Smash Hits and looking at the indie pages – the first copy I bought had Crass and Cabaret Voltaire! This was 1981, so it was still a punk thing.

"Then, when I was old enough to go to gigs, I went to The Greyhound and The Clarendon in Hammersmith. My first gig was Japan at the Hammersmith Odeon, supported by Blancmange. So Blancmange were the first band I ever saw live, in December 1981. And I think my second gig was The Teardrop Explodes. I've got it written down somewhere. I also saw Haircut One Hundred and Duran Duran and ABC…"

I love the fact, I tell her, that she clearly kept meticulous records of the gigs she attended as a teenager. And that, despite immersing herself in the indie hinterland of pub backrooms and photocopied fanzines, she still cultivated an abiding love of mainstream, chart-friendly pop. She talks just as enthusiastically about Haircut frontman Nick Heyward as she does about her beloved Cocteau Twins. She nods enthusiastically.

"These were real bands," she says. "God, Adam And The Ants came fully from the punk scene. And Bananarama had done the London clubs. The bands I was into as a teenager still had that punk or glam background – they'd liked David Bowie and Roxy Music. I actually feel quite lucky that these were the bands I grew up with."

She pauses momentarily, clearly racking her brain for the contents of some long-forgotten gig ledger, written in faded biro and relegated to a dusty cardboard box in the loft.

"Actually," she ponders. "I think I saw Haircut One Hundred twice."

It is, however, the spirit of the Cocteau Twins that continues to haunt her musical adventures. Lush, the band she formed in 1987 with schoolmate Miki Berenyi, were among the first wave of bands to be labelled "shoegaze" – turning the Cocteau trademark of ethereal vocals and multilayered guitars into a movement that fluttered alluringly across the inky pages of the music press. They were even produced by Cocteaus guitarist Robin Guthrie. Three decades on, is the influence still being felt on her debut solo album? The title of 'Pearlies', I suggest, is surely a homage to her favourite band's 1984 single, 'Pearly-Dewdrops' Drops'…

Apparently not.

"It was only when I was emailing Nat Cramp [founder of record label Sonic Cathedral] and I mentioned 'Pearly-Dewdrops' Drops' that I thought, 'God – the album title!'," insists Emma. "It wasn't that at all, but I guess it must have been in my subconscious. You're the first person who's said it. Where did I get it from? It might have been something to do with Pearly Kings and Queens. Or teeth. I just wanted something a bit playful."

Nevertheless, she reveals, Robin Guthrie played a pivotal role in the album's gestation, pooh-poohing Emma's initial intention to enlist an alternate lead vocalist.

"The one thing he said to me was, 'You've got to sing these tracks yourself, Emma – it's time, and you can do it'," she recalls. "I said, 'I can't'."

Why the reluctance? She'd sung plenty of backing vocals for Lush before. And, indeed, her follow-up band Sing-Sing. Was it insecurity about her singing voice or a reluctance to be the centre of attention?

"A bit of both, I think," she admits. "I'd just thought I couldn't sing lead vocals. I've always been slightly on the sidelines, and I felt very comfortable there. But then I thought, 'What's the worst that can happen?'. And it's been fine so far. At my ripe old age, I've suddenly taken the plunge.

"Initially, I came up with another name. I didn't want it to be 'Emma Anderson', but Nat said, 'Nope, it's got to be your own name', and I get why. I remember with Sing-Sing, a little American label released our first record and they said, 'We want "Emma from Lush" on a sticker'. I was just…"

She makes a cringing face, as though someone has suddenly spilt cold custard all over her feet.

"But you have to do it, and I'm fine now," she says. "It was just lack of confidence. And my *name*… you know, it's the name I've had since I was a baby. '*Emma Anderson*' [she says it as a childish playground taunt, mocking herself]. You hear it when you're sitting in the dentist's waiting room – '*EMMA ANDERSON*'!"

She laughs at her own self-consciousness, but the lyrics of the album reflect a burgeoning self-confidence, I suggest. "Swimming through space when time's postponed / See if I can make it on my own," she sings on 'I Was Miles Away'. Elsewhere, there are hints of clean breaks from strained relationships, but she won't be drawn on the finer details.

"There are a lot of lyrics that don't really mean much at all, actually," she says. "'I Was Miles Away' is just imagery and wordplay. 'Willow And Mallow' is the same. Fantasy situations."

Unexpectedly, TV composer Ronnie Hazlehurst is namechecked in the press release for 'Pearlies'. The folky 'Willow And Mallow', apparently, was partly influenced by his arrangement of the theme to Carla Lane's uber-dark late 70s sitcom, 'Butterflies'. The conversation drifts to other vintage comedies with bleak undertones – Emma cites 'Ever Decreasing Circles' and 'The Fall And Rise Of Reginald Perrin' as particular favourites.

"Even 'Fawlty Towers' is about a dysfunctional man having a midlife crisis," she adds. "And that's what we grew up with."

She is earthily funny and utterly grounded – not just by the common currency of vintage television, but by the necessity of the nine-to-five. The sterling guitar licks lent to 'Pearlies' by Suede stalwart Richard Oakes were forged not, as you might expect, amid the hurly-burly of the 1990s festival circuit ("He was in the hotel with his babysitter," quips Emma, in reference to his youthful start in the band), but in her current gainful employment as a bookkeeper. You know, accounts and spreadsheets and all that. Her clients, she reveals, include Suede's current tour manager.

"I'd done office work before I was in Lush, then I started working again in about 2000," she explains. "I had to knuckle down and get a job. I had a few royalties after we'd split up, but they… declined, as it were. I've actually worked in offices more than I've been a musician. Which I think surprises some people."

Is this, I wonder, the secret side of stardom? It's easy for fans to assume that anyone who has ever enjoyed a Top 40 hit spends the rest of their life in a mansion with gold taps. But, going back to Blancmange, their frontman Neil Arthur once told me there are very few pop stars who haven't done a bit of painting and decorating on the side.

"Very much so!" nods Emma with a wry smile. "I'm still a bookkeeper – I did some work this morning. I actually like the autonomy. I've never earned enough… Lush didn't sell a massive amount of records. It probably feels now like we were bigger than we were in the 1990s, but we never got a silver disc or anything. We were on an indie label. We did all right, but I think the appreciation of the band has maybe grown over time."

Some of us were there at the start, I point out. Those 1980s Cocteau Twins singles that transport her back to her formative years as a music fan? My 1990s equivalent was Lush. Listening to the band's earliest releases again, as I did in the build-up to our conversation, is a fast-track to my days as an excitable, indie-obsessed sixth-former, scribbling my own meticulous notes on the emerging bands I was reading about in NME and Melody Maker. And 'Pearlies' gives me the self-same feeling.

"Aw!" she grins, seeming both thrilled and genuinely surprised. "Thank you. That's brilliant."

It's those psychic echoes again, isn't it? Not in the walls of a spooky Victorian mansion this time, but in the grooves of a record that brings the ghosts of shimmering shoegaze glories floating into the crisp autumn air of 2023. Pearlies out, everyone.

'Pearlies' is out now on Sonic Cathedral

COSMIC THING

Steeped in sci-fi dystopia, avant-garde sensibilities and a multi-genre assault, Teeth Of The Sea exist in an "alchemical headspace" where sonically, almost anything goes

WORDS: STEVIE CHICK
PICTURE: AL OVERDRIVE

It's a summer's evening in 2019, and – ladies and gents – Teeth Of The Sea are floating in space. And not for the first time. As evidenced by their brilliant new album 'Hive', this London trio are experienced followers of cosmic visions. But on this night in particular, we find the lysergic shapeshifters removed from their typical environs. Instead of a shabby rehearsal room or modest music venue, they're playing synths and guitars beneath the gargantuan IMAX screen at London's Science Museum, as documentary footage of NASA's Apollo mission to the moon is projected behind them.

Following an introduction by Wally Funk – a veteran aviator who'd been a volunteer in NASA's Women In Space programme in the early 1960s – Teeth Of The Sea perform breathtaking music, avoiding by design all the "cosmic" cliches too often indulged by space rock. Instead, with nary a wibble of 'Star Trek' theremin, these pieces connect with the emotion underlying the footage of this epochal moment in history.

"We wanted to evoke a feeling of being dwarfed by the cosmos, of being humbled by it," says bass and trumpet-player, Sam Barton. "The melancholy and the existential doubts one must feel when travelling through space – that sense of jeopardy."

Jeopardy was, in fact, something Teeth Of The Sea were all too familiar with that night.

"We were the most nervous we'd ever been before a concert," remembers guitarist Jimmy Martin. "We'd never played for two-and-a-half hours before. There was so much that could go wrong."

But much like that fabled 11th Apollo mission, the production (which Martin calls "the most elaborate thing we've done – like a Metallica gig or something") was a triumph, their splashdown greeted by rapturous, near-universal applause. There was one dissenting flyer in the ointment, however.

"I could see Wally Funk down the front as we performed," sighs Barton. "She had her fingers in her ears all through the concert."

Well, you can't please everyone… indeed, the quixotic, brilliant discography of Teeth Of The Sea proves you're perhaps better off trying to please only yourself.

The group formed 15 or so years ago, from an amorphous gang of music-obsessed dudes who all worked at the much-missed branch of HMV on London's Oxford Street. The three who would become Teeth Of The Sea killed time with their mates on the shop floor, having long, rambling, passionate discussions about music, which continued through to inevitable post-work sessions at the pub and on regular trips to get their ears boxed at gigs, clubs and the legendary All Tomorrow's Parties weekenders.

Martin cites a gig by electro-noise terrorists Wolf Eyes at London's Electrowerkz as a key inspiration for TOTS.

"It was a genuine epiphany," he claims. "Wolf Eyes were making bracing, avant-garde art, but it was also incredibly visceral, immediate and hedonistic – a pulverising racket with a party atmosphere. It's what made us get into a rehearsal room and make our own noise, and it was much more fun than we'd expected."

From the start, that noise reflected the clashing influences and skills of the musicians making it, coining a winningly diverse lexicon of reference

points they moulded into their own mutant sound. Their latest offering, 'Hive', is their boldest, most coherent suite yet, shifting with laser-guided vision between caustic industrial slow-burners ('Get With The Program'), glacial electropop ('Butterfly House'), gothic Aphex epics ('Liminal Kin') and muscular but ambient funk ('Powerhorse'). This sonic restlessness characterises all Teeth Of The Sea's releases.

"We're never gonna make a straight-up metal or jazz tune, or an electronic banger," says Mike Bourne, the man responsible for the group's electronics. "Because if one of us wants to do that, the other two are going to bring their completely different influences to the table."

"We still want to surprise each other with fresh ideas and move Teeth Of The Sea in new directions," adds Martin. "We've never cared about fitting in anywhere. Whenever people try to pigeonhole us as a psych rock band or a post-rock band, or an electronic band, we always pigheadedly resist that."

"The next record could be entirely made on fucking mandolins or something," laughs Bourne, though it sounds as much a threat as a joke.

The IMAX show wasn't the band's first foray into live soundtracking – they've previously accompanied sci-fi classic 'Flash!', ludicrous post-apocalyptic actioner 'Dog Soldiers', and the 1984 adaptation of Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' in the shadow of the Large Hadron Collider.

"They're a lot of work," admits Barton of these projects. "Composing music that's performed perhaps twice to a combined audience of around 75 people, and then never heard again."

But there was something to this Science Museum material that Teeth Of The Sea couldn't stomach abandoning to their archives, and three of the pieces reappear on 'Hive'. Two of those tracks – 'Artemis' and 'Apollo' – both soaked in trumpet-driven sadness, bookend the album, grounding it with the existential melancholy they'd reached for at the IMAX.

The "cosmic" is a regular inspiration for the group. The title of the new album is itself a nod to 'Hellstrom's Hive', the 1973 novel by 'Dune' author Frank Herbert.

"With science fiction, there's no rules, no limit to your imagination," reasons Bourne. "Imagining the future is very attractive to us."

"There's a long lineage of artists, like Tangerine Dream, testing the outer limits through science fiction," chips in Martin. "And we've always vibed off the music in sci-fi movies, like how Kubrick used György Ligeti to conjure something otherworldly in '2001: A Space Odyssey'."

Those who do it badly, however, earn a place in TOTS' bad books.

"Hans Zimmer's soundtrack to the recent 'Dune' movie felt very rote," says Martin, frowning.

Perhaps 'Dune' is a candidate for a TOTS live soundtracking?

"Maybe," he answers. "People ask why we don't do film scores, but the truth is the opportunities haven't come our way."

"We do still live in hope of being asked to soundtrack something though," says Bourne.

"It wouldn't even have to be dystopian sci-fi," adds Barton, as wary as a Hollywood star of the dangers of being typecast. "A knockabout romantic comedy would be great."

'Hive' is out now on Rocket Recordings

IMPERFECT STORM

From the heart of Manchester's thriving electronic scene, Hyperdawn's asymmetric, future-facing music moulds tape loops, cut-up sounds and strange effects into wonderfully wonky experimental shapes

WORDS: JEREMY ALLEN
PICTURE: CALLAN DOOLEY

The dawning of, er, Hyperdawn was more gradual than the duo's name might imply. It was while studying at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester in 2015 that Vitalija Glovackyte and Michael Cutting considered experimenting together with reel-to-reel tape recorders and several home-made instruments, including an old Casio monophonic keyboard, modified with an array of jack plugs and sockets and rewired to accommodate countless different effects.

Both classically trained, multidisciplinary artists in their own right, Glovackyte and Cutting decided that their unique skill sets might work well together for a one-off 15-minute assignment. And so it proved.

'Mario Goes Frippertronics' became a projected installation with a title that references the Nintendo computer-game character and the dual tape machine technique popularised by Brian Eno and Robert Fripp in the early 1970s. The piece was initially performed under the Rotherhithe Tunnel on some scaffolding, and then later at an electronics festival in Glovackyte's native Lithuania, a film of which can be found on the internet.

"Oh my god, is that still up there?" exclaims Glovackyte, clapping her hand to her mouth.

The pair laugh. Both agree that it's time to update their respective websites. There's certainly nothing to be ashamed of regarding the piece, but they've come a long way since then.

Hyperdawn released their debut album 'Bleach' in late 2019. It received good reviews but also ran into the liminal uncertainty of the pandemic, with a number of dates cancelled and all promotional activities curtailed. If that felt like a false dawn, though, things look to be on a more even keel with their follow-up, 'Steady' and they've clearly grown into their oddball symbiosis.

Glovackyte says Hyperdawn have mostly earned a reputation so far for live performances. They've become something of a fixture at the White Hotel in Salford, a hip creative hub which has helped launch the careers of contemporaries like Space Afrika, Iceboy Violet, Blackhaine and sundry artists on the Fixed Abode label.

"After a show, a lot of people comment about the focus on our faces," she says. "There's hundreds of things to remember within one set, because if one loop is not changed at a particular time, then a certain technique that I have on my table won't work."

It's not easy to put your finger on what Hyperdawn do, but whatever it is, they're doing it better now than ever. It's pop, Jim, but not as we know it…

"I guess we've both gradually been finding our own way without any particular goal," says Cutting. "Just always experimenting and trying to find out what it is we're trying to say."

And on 'Steady', it's not always about what they say but how they say it. The opening track, 'Say It So', is based around an off-kilter ambient loop which feels as though it could melt away at any moment. 'Basic' is built on warped, sampled percussion and is swathed in ghostly interference. And 'Don't Like It', with Glovackyte's overladen vocal harmonies, sounds like weird industrial chamber pop. These are chopped-up pop songs fraternising with the classical avant-garde.

As musicians and as Hyperdawn, Glovackyte and Cutting co-exist in both worlds, not really belonging to either. It's a state of limbo that they seem to enjoy.

"Hyperdawn is the main focus for both of us," says Cutting. "We still do our own projects, and we've got this network of festivals and musicians that commission us based on the things we've done in the past. But it's a separate world in terms of the structure of how contemporary music and pop music work, with distinct types of people, audiences and funding. So it's interesting being in the middle. We go to experimental music festivals in India and present pop music which is outside the box. For us, it's a natural, transitory place. A no-man's land."

The duo's process involves jamming for up to 12 hours at a time with Cutting's loops and Glovackyte's home-made instruments. They then go about painstakingly identifying small segments that work, before extricating, manipulating and building on them. In the digital age, recording techniques have eliminated mistakes, banished hiss and quantised everything to within an inch of its life, but Hyperdawn live for the aberrations.

"Beauty is in the faults and the glitches," says Glovackyte. "The erosion of the tape as well. Sometimes we've been using one loop for so long that it starts to erode with the magnetic layer coming off."

"We deliberately look for the mistakes, basically," adds Cutting. "That's what we're interested in – things that go wrong."

He holds up some unfurled tape from a cassette that's been crudely botched together.

"I literally just use scissors and Sellotape," he says. "It's not like using proper tape. We're cutting at an angle and then trying to match the other side with the same angle, and most of the time it's a little bit off. It's not a seamless transition from one side of the tape to the other, and that's deliberate. If we want a really fucked-up one, we'll use a piece that has lots of crinkles in it."

"We'll take a bog-standard R&B or drum 'n' bass beat and just completely mess it up," continues Glovackyte. "We'll record two seconds of it and then cut it up and reshape it entirely. You can hear that on 'A Couple Of Strangers' or 'Lucky You, Lucky Me' from the album."

Glovackyte's part in the musical puzzle comes from her songwriting as well as the astonishing sounds she literally brings to her table, prised from an impressive array of unlikely-looking instruments.

"But what is an instrument anyway?" she asks.

Although Glovackyte recoils from using words such as "recycling" or "upcycling", she happily takes old motors from mobile phones, broken Sony Walkmans and discarded turntables recovered from skips, and makes gorgeous, haunting, reanimated music from them.

"My father is an engineer and my mum's a seamstress, so it's all about a hands-on approach to everything," she reveals. "I really grew up with tools and a love for making things, so I try to implement that in our music. It's all about a love of preservation, basically."

'Steady' is out now on Them There

REAL LIVE WIRES

BARRY BERMANGE & DELIA DERBYSHIRE
Inventions For Radio
SILVA SCREEN

"This is an attempt to illustrate, with sounds and voices, the dream condition. All the voices were recorded from life and arranged in a setting of pure electronic sound…"

The plummy-voiced BBC announcer sums it up perfectly. In 1963, playwright Barry Bermange conducted a series of unorthodox vox pops with assorted members of the public, many of whom were users of the Hornsey Old People's Welfare Council. The task he set them? Simply to describe the details of their nocturnal imaginings.

The resulting interviews were assembled into 'The Dreams', a 40-minute sound collage set to radiophonic backing by a then-uncredited Delia Derbyshire and broadcast on the BBC's pragmatically titled Third Programme. And blimey – thanks to Derbyshire's pioneering talent, "the dream condition" is illustrated with knobs on. And, presumably, twiddled.

"I'm being followed and pursued by something," begins one tremulously nervous lady, as Derbyshire's electronic heartbeat quickens. "I swam as fast as I could to get away from the crocodile, but the crocodile suddenly changed into a lion and then that changed into a tiger," continues a younger-sounding gent.

In an impeccably assembled narrative, our collective dreamers plummet through disorientating voids before emerging into bafflingly alien landscapes. "It looks like the moon because it's all dried up," recounts a bemused woman, with Derbyshire's accompaniment so redolent of her most famous TV assignment that it's hard not to imagine a police box gently materialising at the edge of a crater.

But the journey takes a darker turn. In a "frightening and suffocating sea", genuinely deceased family members cling onto heartbreaking vestiges of life. "I could feel this tin hat… I could see my youngest brother's face," says another lady. "He more or less shuddered… I thought to myself, 'I know he's safe, he's alive'. I must tell my mother." The dreams collected are a fascinating insight into the British subconscious of the 1960s, but also act as a touching reminder that our collective psyche still bore deep, emotional wounds from the trauma of two recent world wars. Derbyshire's drone-like soundscape becomes a throbbing scar on a rainy, grief-stricken day.

Three more 'Inventions For Radio' – as they were titled – followed throughout 1964 and 1965. The next, 'Amor Dei', is an intriguing theological debate. "God is my friend, my only friend," pleads one elderly contributor, her voice cracking with emotion. But there's no shortage of dissent. "A social ritual for weak people who can't think for themselves," is the dismissive conclusion of an uncompromising mansplainer. Derbyshire's accompaniment – uplifting electronic hymnals for the believers, a shoulder-sagging hummadruz for the cynics – feels like a reminder of her own staunchly Catholic upbringing.

'The After-Life', meanwhile, assembles collective expectations of the great beyond. "One is granted a vision of loved ones who have preceded us into a higher life," insists a clearly convinced male interviewee. The nervous jangle of Derbyshire's music feels less certain, but she surrenders to a spectral church choir as the ailing residents of Hornsea seek refuge in the green fields and clear water of the hereafter. "I know what it is to have pain and sickness," states a frail-sounding old lady, and any cynicism suddenly feels unspeakably and unnecessarily cruel.

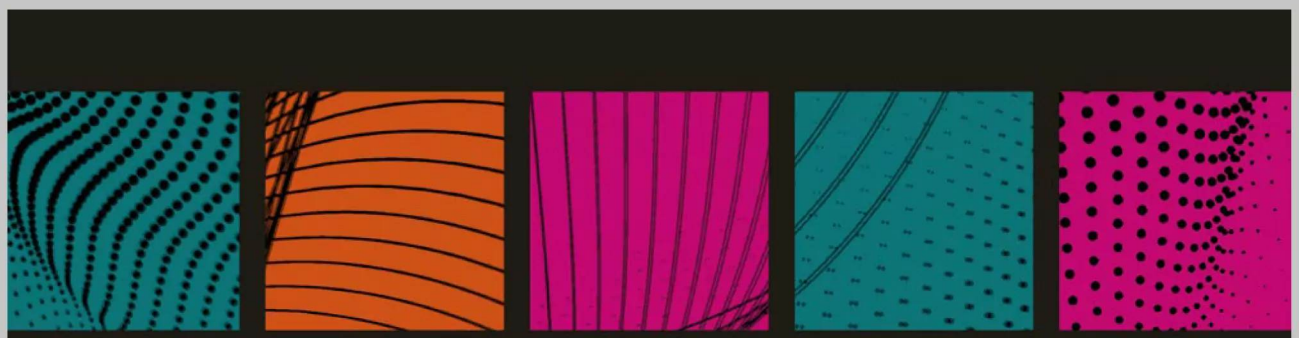
The final instalment, 'The Evenings Of Certain Lives', initially feels like a dispiriting over-extension of this theme. Here, the more elderly of Bermange's contributors reflect on the miseries of physical ageing, detailing a litany of aching backs and failing hips. But there's an unlikely turning point. "I was gassed during the First World War," recalls an old boy. "That slowed me down…" It's the opening of an affecting portal to the stolen childhoods of the early 20th century. Of frolics in Highgate Ponds, of gunfire at Ypres and crashed zeppelins, of the crepuscular duel between "a swordfish and shark" witnessed by one croaky-voiced sailor five or six decades earlier in some far-flung ocean of his youth.

Derbyshire's contemporaries at the Radiophonic Workshop have spoken of 'Inventions For Radio' as her finest achievement. But it's important not to underplay the contribution of Bermange, whose concept provides both an emotional roller-coaster and a priceless window into the mores of everyday life in the 1960s.

This first-ever commercial release, a six-disc set comprising three hours of jaw-dropping radio and a selection of isolated cues, feels indispensable. And the message throughout is consistent. Life can be painful, but – if you know where to look – it can also be filled with hope and beauty.

Above all, it's important to take note of the sage advice offered by a spirited old gal in the final instalment. "Never give up," she asserts. "Try and *do* something… that's my opinion of life." Sixty years ago, Bermange and Derbyshire did something rather wonderful.

BOB FISCHER



Inventions for Radio

The Dreams • Amor Dei • The After-Life • The Evenings of Certain Lives

Barry Bermange
Delia Derbyshire
BBC Radiophonic Workshop

MARY OCHER – PHOTO: PIETRO PONTIERI

MARY OCHER

Approaching Singularity: Music For The End Of Time

UNDERGROUND INSTITUTE

Authoritarian regimes, string theory, transhumanism and surveillance capitalism are just a few of the weighty topics that Moscow-born experimental artist Mary Ocher ponders on her latest album. Her sound is equally stuffed with ideas – featuring pounding techno, neoclassical piano, kosmische, ecclesiastical organs and even a Gothic folk ballad in the form of 'Yellow Modulations (Triumph Of The Mind Over The Body)'. Ocher's vocal style and disregard for musical boundaries place her not too far away from being Kate Bush after a night of doomscrolling. **PC**

PEJZAŻ

List I / List II

THE VERY POLISH CUT OUTS

Bartosz Kruczyński is a prolific producer with records under a host of names, including Earth Trax and The Phantom. As Pejzaż, the Warsaw artist makes "Baltic beat", stitching together samples of rare Eastern European tracks to create gorgeous collages. His fifth album as Pejzaż is a two-parter, with 'Fata Morgana' on 'List I' mixing hip hop drums and dreamlike guitars, and 'Barwa IV' on 'List II' all stormy synth pads and emotive vocals. Atmospheric and highly original. **BM**

AMOR MUERE

A Time To Love, A Time To Die

SCRAWL

Mexico artist Mabe Fratti often brews her own giddy concoction of ambient dreampop and modern classical, but here she forms an "experimental supergroup" with singer Camille Mandoki, violinist Gibrana Cervantes and tape manipulator Concepción Huerta. The opening track, 'LA', sets an impressive tone, with Fratti's jagged cello lines and honey-toned vocals succumbing to overpowering noise. 'Can We Provoke Reciprocal Reaction' adds jazzy grooves, but the 19-minute closer, 'Violeta Y Malva', is the jaw-dropper, with Mandoki and Fratti's voices fusing thrillingly amid a stirringly dark landscape. **BF**

SHACKLETON

The Scandal Of Time

WOE TO THE SEPTIC HEART

Sam Shackleton has been on a collaborative journey over the past year, hooking up with everyone from Polish jazz players and African musicians to Anna Gerth, his German folk-singing muse, on this album. The work is split between her three seriously haunted vocal performances – with the opener, 'Eine Dunkle Wolke', setting the bewitched theme nicely – and Shackleton's instrumentals, which slip between chilled, head-nodding beats and his trademark off-kilter polyrhythms. 'The Dying Regime' is a woozy, dreamy highlight, but this is quality throughout. **BW**

LEE GAMBLE

LEE GAMBLE
Models
HYPERDUB

Anyone who scorns the idea that genuine emotional engagement can come from experimental electronic music should be locked away with London producer Lee Gamble's latest album and a big box of Kleenex. The likes of 'She's Not', 'Blurring' and 'Juice' are heartbreaking affairs, laced with deep melancholy and a formless, Cocteau Twins-style vocal layer. 'Phantom Limb', meanwhile, mixes carefully plucked acoustic instruments with a piercing synth siren, before evolving into a rather cute, polyrhythmic head-nodder. Confident, innovative and, above all, stunning. **BW**

TULIPOMANIA
Dreaming Of Sleep
SURSUMCORDA

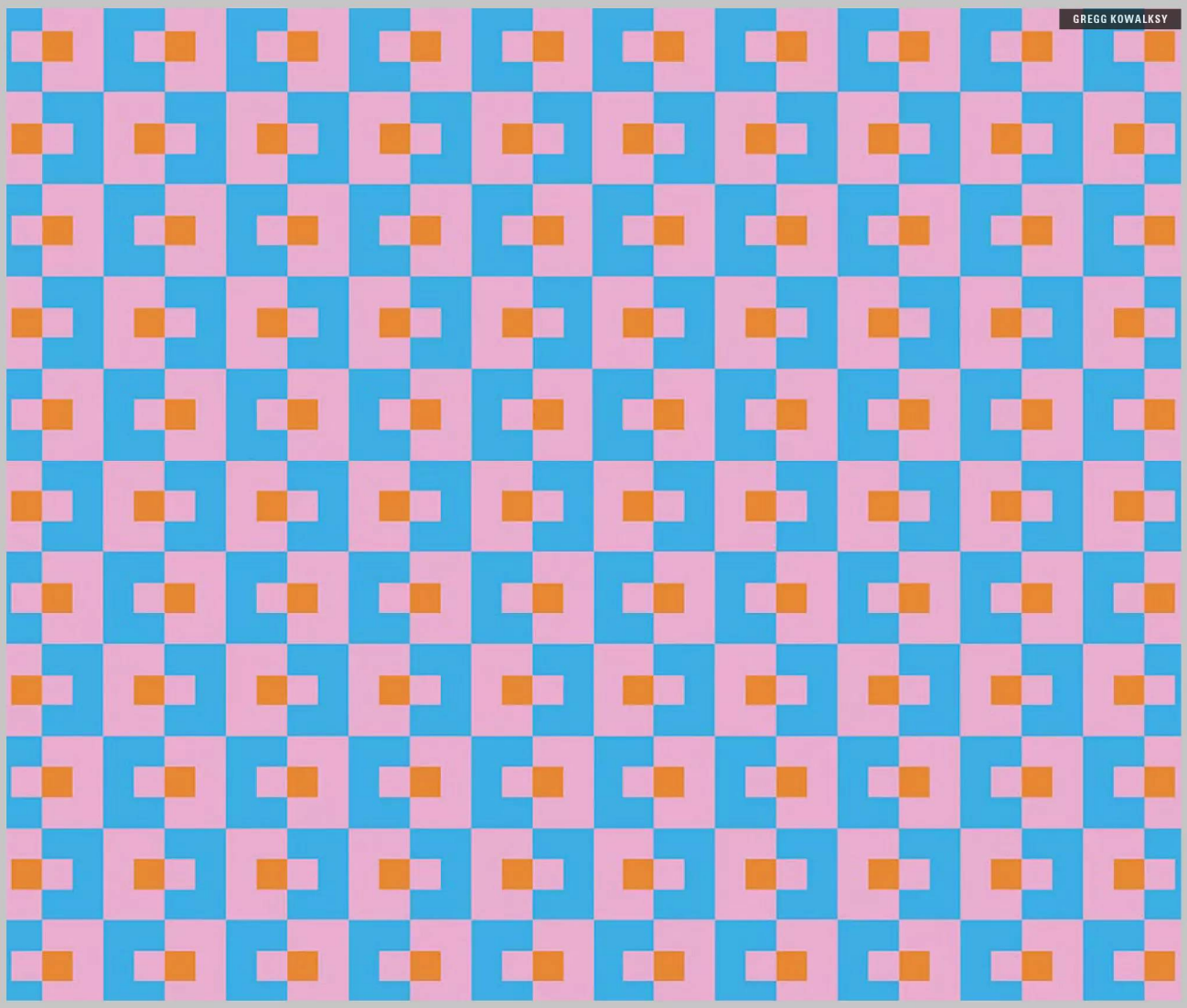
With a collective name inspired by the 1637 Dutch tulip market collapse, Pennsylvanian duo Tulipomania are just as alluringly eccentric as you might expect. Singer Tom Murray's unearthly, aching delivery and Cheryl Gelover's lofty synths mix with punkish, gothic discordance. This is their fourth full-length release, and the songs are as dark and ruthless as ever, particularly on highlights like 'You Had To Be There' and 'Shines On', which are lugubrious in the most shrewd and exquisite way possible. **IB**

KIFFIE
A Sense Of Unease
BANDCAMP

This is a raw and utterly devastating long-player from Norwich's Daniel Kiff. A collection of downbeat electronic pop tracks dealing with the savagery of a relationship breakdown, the muted pianos and plaintive synth melodies of 'Hard To Breathe' exemplify a harrowing sense of suffocation and strain. As the album progresses, vulnerability gives way to hope. 'Learning To Sing' is freighted with positivity, while 'One Look' conveys the sensation of falling headlong in love over crisp synths haunted by the ghosts of 1980s electronic pop. Brutal and yet, beautiful. **MS**

THE UMLAUTS
Slags
PRAH RECORDINGS

Plenty of groups have dabbled in post-punk and electropop over the past 20 years, yet few transcend their influences as easily or with such style as The Umlauts. This is a stocktake compilation that includes their first two EPs plus three new tracks. Of the new material, the strings-assisted 'Mad Blue Love' is a dramatic treatise on the loss of self in relationships. Even better is 'Dance & Go', a dancefloor bomb that sounds like the Hot Chip/Ladytron team-up of your dreams. Now, let's have that debut album proper. **WS**



GREGG KOWALSKY

Eso Es

MEXICAN SUMMER

On his 2017 'L'Orange L'Orange' album, California's Gregg Kowalsky created a suite of synth pieces which captured the intoxicating warmth of the sun. With 'Eso Es', those same rays send him toward the lush textures of Suzanne Ciani and Lawrence English. 'Fragile Water' gushes like a dawn-dappled river, before 'Fontainebleau' and 'Nights Move' take a moment to luxuriate in the calm currents. As the record closes with 'Brass Dolphins', Kowalsky sets us adrift in a pool of new age light that's restorative, mellow and very lovely. **ST**

LUKE SANGER

Shared System Research Project

BANDCAMP

Originally known for his kinetic techno tracks, Norwich producer Luke Sanger has recently moved towards ambient electronics. His new album uses only a Share System synth and a spring reverb to conjure enchanting, melodic pieces, all recorded in a single take. The plangent bleeps, metallic effects and steady bass of 'Gee Flat' make for an early highlight, while there's a mystic yearning to the spiralling tones of 'Whistler'. Alternately playful and pensive, it's a gorgeous record. **BM**

FLAMINGODS

Head Of Pomegranate

THE LIQUID LABEL

This sixth full-length outing from London psychonauts Flamingods was recorded in Atlanta and produced by Grammy-winning big shot Ben H Allen, of Animal Collective, MIA and Deerhunter fame, and the bravura, technicolour substance he brings here is telling. Bristling with genre-melding, high-voltage energy throughout and weaving new wave, post-punk, electronics and cosmic psychedelia into tracks like the speeding, euphoric opener 'Dreams (On The Strip)' or glam-stomping rabble-rouser 'Gutterball', this might just be the life-enhancing, electro-lysergic dose of magic medicine you've been looking for. **CG**

OBSERVATORIES

Frost Forms

QUIET DETAILS

This is a beautiful, soothing balm of an album from Brighton's Ian Hawgood (who runs the Home Normal imprint) and Craig Tattersall (known for his work as The Humble Bee). As Observatories, the pair have crafted six downtempo tracks that, though themed around the encroaching winter chill, all exude a slowly suffusing warmth. From the gentle tape crackles that guide 'Frost Laced Fields' to the soft electronics of 'Rain Patters', the many intricate details and textures here provide welcome respite from the turmoil of the outside world. **CF**

MARIA BC

MARIA BC
Spike Field
SACRED BONES

San Francisco troubadour Maria BC's second album is named after the topography of man-made metal thorns and semiotic warning signs in the Mexican desert. It's designed to ward off civilisations 10,000 years from now, in the hope they'll not dig up the barrels of toxic nuclear waste buried there. The music here matches that heavy concept with an eerie sonic landscape of underlying dread. 'Amber' sets the scene of folktronic ambience, decorated with echoey, metallic plucked strings and elegiac vocals. It's all remarkably beautiful. **JA**

EVIAN CHRIST
Revanchist
WARP

On Evian Christ's debut long-player, the in-demand Ellesmere Port producer deconstructs the euphoric ingredients of trance to scintillating effect. Never one for half measures – especially after a decade of studio work for some of the biggest names in pop – he throws the kitchen sink at these tracks, with 'Nobody Else' and 'The Beach' arriving laden with tsunami-sized ambient sweeps and evocative vocal features, sounding like the Björk/Omni Trio hook-up that never was. Once you've listened to 'Revanchist', I'll be damned if your bags don't magically pack themselves for a jolly to Goa. **ILS**

IAN WILLIAMS
Slow-Motion Apocalypse
SLAUGHTERBACK

A brassy synth and orchestral soundtrack-o-rama here, from London composer Ian Williams. It's designed to sound as if it's on the edge of orgasm or violence, like all those modern 007 films with fighting and explosions – 'After We're Gone' even employs a twanging guitar you'd think had escaped from a 1962 John Barry session. 'Chronopolis' is five minutes in the key of epic, so much so, even Vangelis might have thought it a bit over the top. An unapologetic muscle car of an album. **MR**

SEPEHR
Pomegranate Skies
GARMO

As head of Shaytoon Records, Iranian-American producer Sepehr has delved deep into Iran's electronic music underground. His second full-length album goes somewhere even more subterranean, however. Drawing on myths of the Greek underworld, 'Pomegranate Skies' portrays Hades through the murky Actress-style electro of 'Styx River', the glowering slo-mo acid of 'Blood Red Sun' and a clutch of malevolent drum 'n' bass tracks. It's a cold, dark place to be, for sure, but – just like Persephone and the pomegranate – you might well get a taste for it. **PC**

HINAKO OMORI

HINAKO OMORI
Stillness, Softness…
HOUNDSTOOTH

"I think of it as a blanket of sorts – very gentle, very calming," says Japanese-British producer Hinako Omori of her second full-length release. Certainly, it would take a large dose of stimulants for any listener not to be soothed by the songs on this album, with deeply tranquil, succouring tracks like 'Ember' and 'Cyanotype Memories' lapping round your ears like gentle waves on a windless day. Crafted from analogue synths including the Prophet '08, Moog Voyager and UDO Super 6 (boasting "binaural, 3D-simulating sound"), it's a dreamy world indeed. **IB**

BOVINE MINDSTATE
Bovine Mindstate
NOT APPLICABLE

This debut album from Leverton Fox's Tim Giles finds the drummer in deep electronic dub territory. Primarily an exercise in dexterous, multicycle rhythms, 'The Cow Creamer' finds Giles showcasing seemingly impossible layers of interwoven percussion, all subjected to springy reverb, while also hitching these patterns to suppressed synth spirals. 'Buckley's Dub' offers a bouncy bassline and swirling samples of Herbie Mann-style flute with an incessantly funky break, while the 10-minute 'Water Feature' builds a vibrant, ever-evolving dubscape from the sound of water droplets. Music for late night sessions. **MS**

ALESSIO DUTTO
Dusk Communion
MIDIRA

A quick glance at the album covers of Italian producer Alessio Dutto's dark ambient output, will tell you that spooky religious iconography is an important weapon in his arsenal of sonic terror. The six tracks on 'Dusk Communion' bring to mind an echoing, empty cathedral. Ghostly choirs emerge from white-out distortion on 'Still Pure', and suspended Mellotron-style voices hold 'Memories Are Horn Shaped' in place until it collapses into a slow-motion explosion. Not short on sheer auditory brutality, but packed with drama and variety. **BW**

LENHART TAPES
Dens
GLITTERBEAT

Serbian folk music has a problematic recent past, with so-called "turbo folk" used as nationalist propaganda during the 1990s wars in the former Yugoslavia. However, in the hands of Belgrade artist Vladimir Lenhart, traditional Balkan music becomes part of an alternative history that also takes in Serbia's underground punk and experimental scenes. It's reimagined via tape collages of discordant drones and industrial noise on tracks like 'Mejremo', with vocalists Tijana Stanković, Zoja Borovčanin and Svetlana Spajić all key to the evocative and unsettling atmosphere. **PC**

HABITAT ENSEMBLE

Habitat Ensemble

MUSIC FROM MEMORY

The Habitat Ensemble is a collective based in the hills between the Czech Republic and Austria, and is led by the musician Marius Houschyar. The mysterious group apparently spend their days in the idyllic village of Mařiž making strange music while conducting interdisciplinary research, with the narrated 'Die Vergessenen Orte' and 'Le Magicien De La Foret' demonstrating a strong pan-European makeup. These are largely ambient works with a proggy tenaciousness and surprising touches of dub, such as on the track 'Clay'. Seek them out, on record at least. **JA**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Stone Tape: Analysing A Ghost By Electronic Means

HIDDEN BRITAIN TAPES

Nigel Kneale's creepy 1972 TV drama 'The Stone Tape' – in which Jane Asher gets the screaming abdabs from haunted walls – clearly still troubles the impressive roster of weirdies on this splendid tribute album. So, The British Stereo Collective's 'Written In Stone' boasts balefully melodic synths, and The Hardy Tree's 'Chuffy' brings sinister folky ambience. And while the likes of Warrington-Runcorn New Town Development Plan and The Twelve Hour Foundation provide heavyweight hauntological chops, the curveball is 'When They Return', a dark drone from Napalm Death founder Nic Bullen. **BF**

MARTINA BERTHER & PHILIPP SCHLOTTER

Matt

HALLOW GROUND

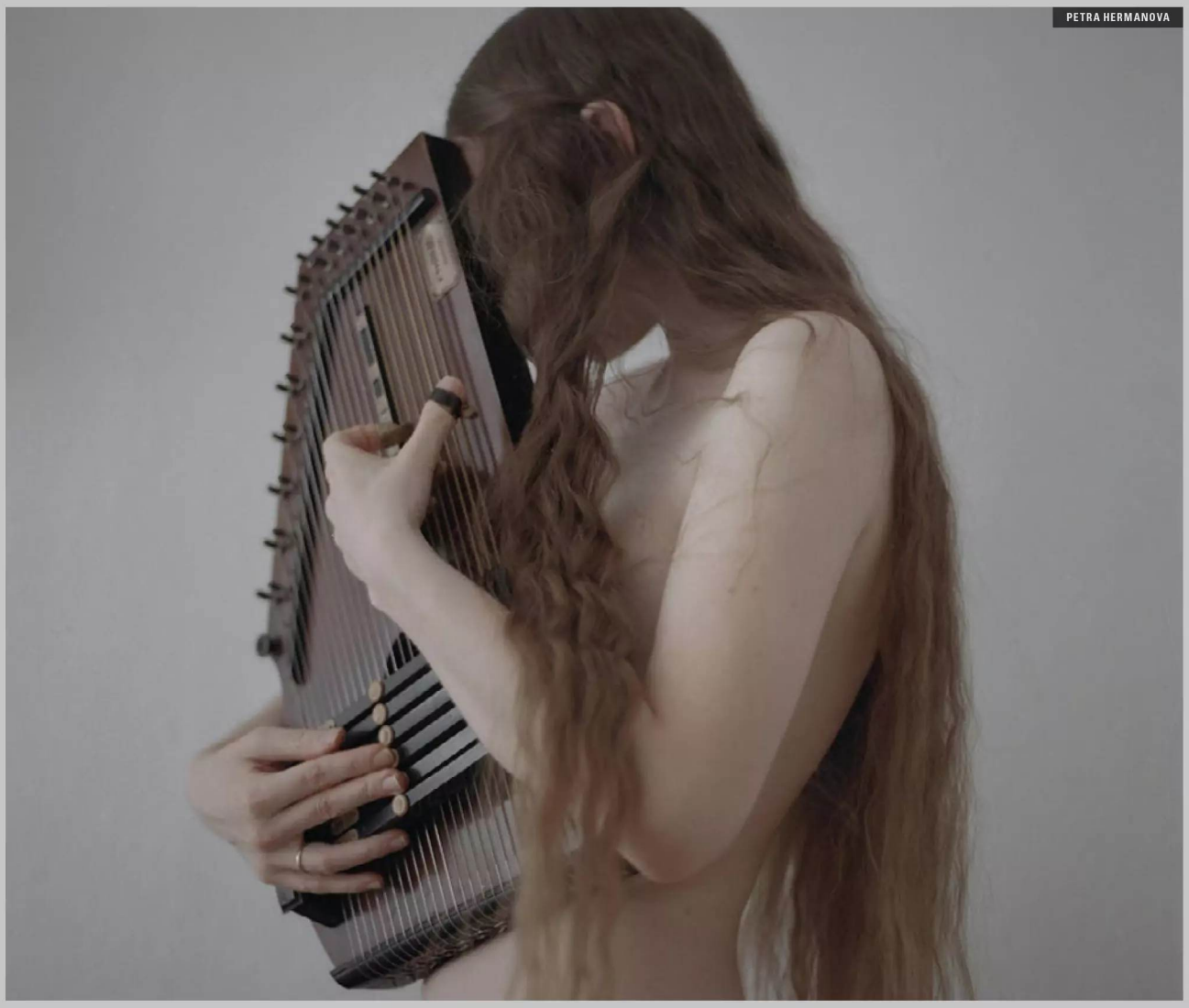
'Matt' is an album of dirge-like harmony between synth and organ, constructed over four days by Swiss musicians Martina Berther and Philipp Schlotter. The opener, 'Unruhe', employs a tempered, sombre drone which has a heavy emotional impact, despite its quite mathematical presaging and technique. The whole album possesses an exceptional quality of modern organ music, and you don't realise quite how deeply affecting it is until the last key is lifted. **FH**

HYPERDAWN

Steady

THEM THERE

Vitalija Glovackyte and Michael Cutting are an aptly named duo. Few records better evoke that early morning not-quite-awake feeling than this, their second album. Glovackyte's vocals are drowsy mumbles, often pitch-shifted so you can barely make them out, and you swear she even yawns on the opening track, 'Say It So'. Her somnolent murmurings are set against backdrops ranging from glitchy industrial clanging ('Don't Like It') to lolloping funk ('Basic') and the tenderly minimal (the gorgeous 'Somebody Take Me Home'). Everything here is blurry and beautifully, tantalisingly out of reach. More please. **WS**



PETRA HERMANOVA

PETRA HERMANOVA

In Death's Eyes

UNGUARDED

Released three years after her father's passing, Petra Hermanova's solo debut is devotional in many senses. The Berlin musician has crafted a memorial, heavily laced with themes of the sacred. Working with organist Denny Wilke of Merseburg Cathedral, Petra herself plays the autoharp, a hand-held folk instrument that acts as counterpoint to the vast church-bound organ. The songs are maudlin, sorrowful and frequently bleak – 'I Am The Lung' pits a light melody and dark organ drones against Petra's bright yet tearful singing. Harrowingly mortal and entirely human. **FH**

RAF AND O

We Are Stars

TELEPHONE

South London duo Raf And O have been purveyors of effervescent, avant-garde art-pop since 2008, turning their hand to anything from apocalyptic, electronica-hued mini-symphonies to elegant, left-field David Bowie covers. 'We Are Stars' is their fifth full-length release and it brings a sense of playfulness to the duo's sound that perhaps isn't quite as palpable on their earlier material. The opening track, 'Still Sitting In Our Time Machines', with its mischievous and bewitching grooves, is a case in point. **IB**

PIERRE BASTIEN & MICHEL BANABILA

Baba Soirée

PINGIPUNG

The first collaboration between French musician Pierre Bastien and Dutch sound artist Michel Banabila, 'Baba Soirée' is a smokey, ramshackle piece derived from wonky loops and a bric-a-brac racket. Opening with 'Stray Carrier Pigeon', a nocturnal creep through drunken kazoo streets, its 10 pieces gradually sober up and begin to peer out through less bleary eyes, the earlier boozy ambles quickening into stricter order by the time we arrive at the straighter, tighter rhythms of 'Ban Bas Aura 2' and 'Rotor Motor'. Really gorgeous stuff. **ST**

GLASS ISLE

Vels D'Èter

OUTER REACHES

This is the second Glass Isle album, but the first to be recorded solo by Brazilian musician Zuleika AvTes. 'Vels D'Èter' is a masterful work of electronic sorcery, welding influences from Czech new wave together with drone, ambient and spectral imaginings built from field recordings. It's a mammoth 20 tracks deep, yet it never once feels boring. By the exceptional closing trio of compositions – particularly the Bowery Electric-esque minimal plod of 'Skullrose Fire' – interest is well and truly piqued. A phenomenal bounty of greyscale music. **FH**

JOHNNY JEWEL

Holly – Original Soundtrack

ITALIANS DO IT BETTER

This soundtrack is an ideal appetite-whetter for Fien Troch's tale of a prognosticating schoolgirl, as Johnny Jewel mixes up his trademark glacial synthscapes ('Eclipse' and 'Connection') with sombre piano pieces like 'Necromancer'. Full of foreboding, it's a deliciously creepy listen, especially when a distressed-sounding ghostly choir sidles into view on the appropriately-titled 'Dread'. Catharsis arrives in the form of a sumptuous closing-titles cover of Frankie Goes To Hollywood's 'The Power Of Love' by Jewel's own electropop project, Desire. **WS**

OPPENHEIMER MKII

The Presence Of The Abnormal

MINIMALKOMBINAT

An album of gold-standard minimal synthpop, 'The Presence Of The Abnormal' was originally released in 2013 as the debut LP from Andy Oppenheimer (formerly one half of Minimal Wave favourites Oppenheimer Analysis) and Mahk Rumbae, aka Codex Empire. Now available on vinyl for the first time, here's an excellent reason to reacquaint yourself with this underrated collection, which plays on the duo's "shared love for 1960s pop and 1980s synth music". From the yearning vocals and appealing ascending notes of 'You Will Never Know', to the moody 'Adrenaline Rush', it's all unmissable stuff. **CF**

FASME

Bloom

ANALOGICAL FORCE

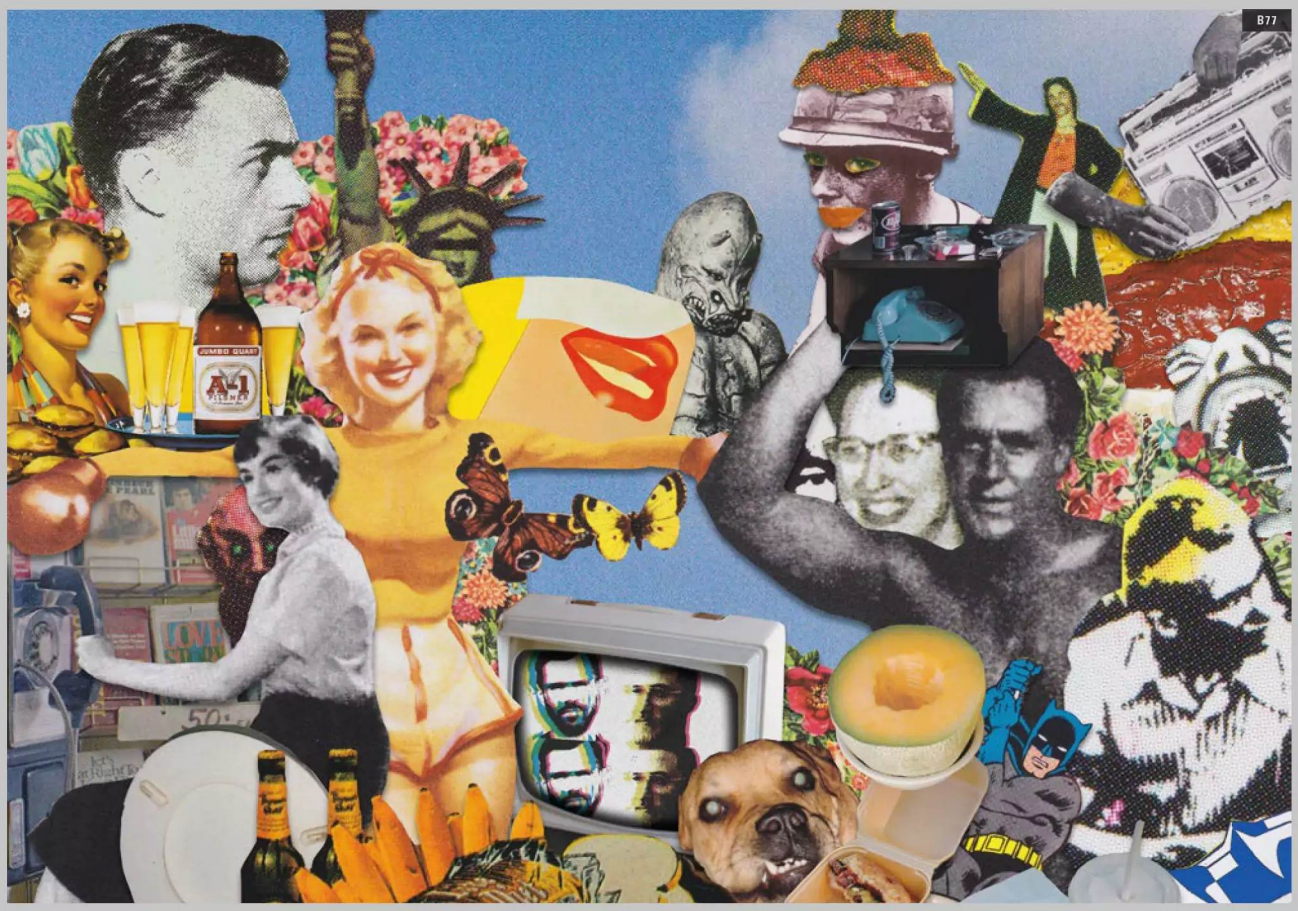
Electro producer Fasme hails from Nantes in France, and in the last few years has released records on Central Processing Unit and Feel My Bicep. He has a real way with melody, and on his debut album, 'Bloom', synth earworms weave through carefully crafted drum machine rhythms. On 'Pursuit', 4/4 kick drums drive the dark arpeggiated bass and eerie keys, while 'Sonic Pantone' is all bittersweet synth cascades, 808 beats and emotive acid lines. Braindance brilliance. **BM**

WILLIE GIBSON

The Halls Of Piranesi

GARE DU NORD

Inspired by scenes from 'Piranesi', Susanna Clarke's 2020 fantasy novel, this imagined score by hardware synth enthusiast Willie Gibson is now seeing a physical release after being made available online last year. Veering between the darkly ambient and the classically grandiose, the album certainly recreates the twists and turns of its namesake. But its best moments come when Gibson finds the sweet spot in between these two extremes, as on midway point 'Room Of The Gulls', a track which is both eerie and enchanting. **IB**



B77
Computer
HALF AWAKE

No "difficult second album" issues here for prodigiously talented Swiss art-pop duo, B77. As childhood friends who grew up in an idyllic mountain village, Léo and Luca's musical mission has "always been powered by dreams". On the evidence of this effervescent follow-up to 2020's 'The Wonderful Labyrinth Of The Mind', their REM phases must surely be soundtracked by the likes of Kraftwerk, Talking Heads, Frazier Chorus and Animal Collective.

Full of high-altitude vitality and eccentric innocence, and with a refreshing openness about the material they are inspired by (such as Suicide's 'Dream Baby Dream' on 'Europa'), 'Computer' is experimental to the core, but still accessible and welcoming. 'Life' is a joyous, life-affirming ode to, of all things, the USA 94 "Soccer" World Cup, envisioned as an imaginary jingle for said event. Elsewhere, the patchwork of exultant chorus lines, shimmering Vince Clark-esque synth chords and unexpected melodic turns on 'Tommy Boy' are an unmissable delight. Recommended. **CG**

SPARKLE DIVISION
Foxy
TEMPORARY RESIDENCE LTD

Perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise that William Basinski, the composer behind the seminal 'The Disintegration Loops' album series, is currently moonlighting in a loungecore trio. Or that their second album 'Foxy' is a concept album about a drug dealer throwing a cocktail party in the Hollywood Hills and then spiking the punch with a sanity-endangering dose of LSD. Setting out with an inviting stroke of chimes followed by a foray into the world of exotica on the opener, 'Have Some Punch', things gradually unravel as we proceed.

Sparkle Division's debut album, which brought some much needed colour to those in the know when it slipped out during the pandemic, was a more abstract proposition than 'Foxy', with jazzy improvisations based largely on cut-up ambient loops. Here, Basinski and bandmates Preston Wendel and Gary Thomas Wright transmogrify from technicolour big band schmaltz on the opener, to trancey big beat euphoria on 'Slip And Slide', with a wealth of imaginative instrumental adventures in between. Hands down, one of the most playful records of the year. **JA**

LARGE PLANTS
The Thorn
GHOST BOX

"The thorn is not a gentle tree, it scratches and it stings." Jack Sharp's second Large Plants album is a folkier affair than the heavy rock of 2022's excellent 'The Carrier', but will still delight anyone raised during a time when pixie-hatted longhairs regularly explored the outer realms of Middle Earth on 'The Old Grey Whistle Test'. Recording single-handedly in a semi-derelict barn, Sharp adds vintage synth sounds to his immaculate guitar stylings to craft a collection of gloriously pastoral prog.

Ecological concerns pervade. 'The Death Of Pliny' sees the demise of Roman naturalist Pliny The Elder during the eruption of Vesuvius as a salutary warning against modern-day climate complacency. "The Earth does not care at all / If every man should fall," sings Sharp in a deceptively winsome whisper. Elsewhere, the vulnerable 'Hope It Is A Feathered Thing' boasts a whiff of Peter Green-led Fleetwood Mac, and there are equal hints of Trees, Comus, Circulus and all others who ever travelled the hallowed pathways betwixt acid-fried psych and bucolic folk rock. Sublime. **BF**

OSMO LINDEMAN

OSMO LINDEMAN
Electronic Works
SÄHKÖ RECORDINGS

Finnish musician and composer Osmo Lindeman was born in Helsinki in 1929. He studied at the city's Sibelius Academy in the late 1950s before returning there in 1972 to teach electronic music. While his earlier avant-garde compositions were created to be performed by an orchestra, his later works were entirely electronic and reflected a desire to no longer rely on a conductor or musicians to interpret the sounds. 'Electronic Works' brings together his mostly unheard and unreleased machine-generated pieces.

On 'Kinetic Forms' and 'Variabile' – both from the late 1960s – what's immediately noticeable is their temperature. Lindeman captures a crisp Baltic chill within their Radiophonic Workshop-like textures, which even pervades TV commercial tunes 'Sunkist' and 'Fin-Humus'. However, beyond this analogue ice, tracks such as 'Spectacle' and 'Ritual' have a rumbling complexity, putting them closer to Pierre Schaeffer than Delia Derbyshire. A brilliant introduction to the work of an unsung electronic pioneer. **ST**

BILL LASWELL & PETE NAMLOOK
Outland
COLD SPRING

Pete Namlook's death in 2012 at the age of 51 was untimely, but he was certainly busy while he was here. He collaborated with everyone from Richie Hawtin and Speedy J, to Mixmaster Morris and Klaus Schulze. Not to mention his relationship with New York no wave/illbient bassist Bill Laswell, which began when an release on Axiom – the label Island set up for Laswell in 1980 – featured samples from an early recording on Namlook's hugely respected Fax imprint.

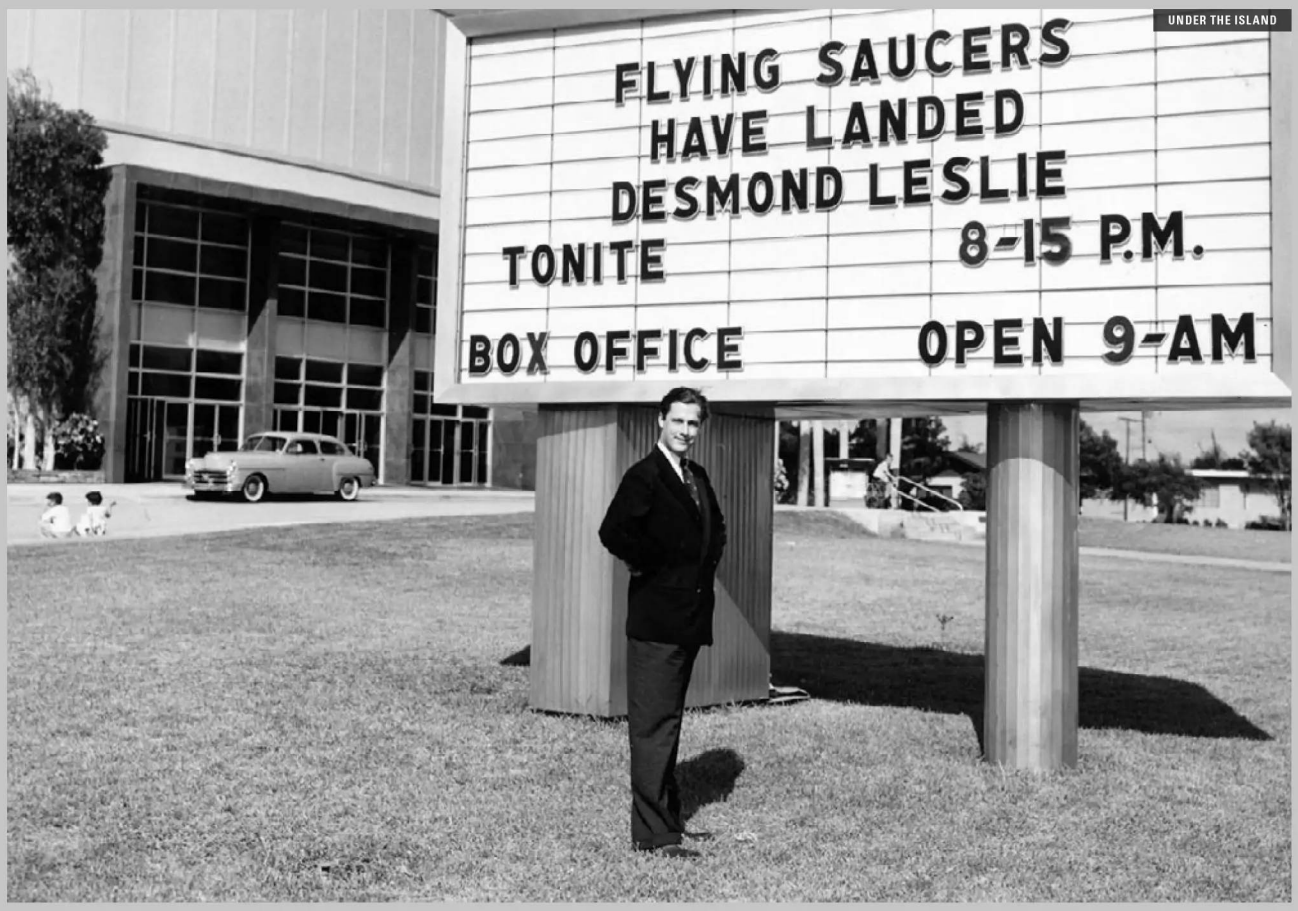
'Outland' is just one of the projects they teamed up on and their music runs to six sizeable volumes, collected here by Cold Spring. First, there's the spine-tingling, Mongolian throat singing-based jamming and drones of their 12-part experiment 'From The Earth To The Ceiling'. Or check out the otherworldly funkiness (via sub-bass and woody percussion) of 'African Virus (Part Five)' and closing chapter 'Blackland' with its spectral radio interference. None of it sounds like Laswell with Namlook tacked on, or vice versa. We can only speculate on what they might have gone on to make, but as legacies go, this one is already quite monumental. **BW**

SCRITTI POLITTI
White Bread Black Beer
ROUGH TRADE

Gosh, it's so good to have this Scritti gem in circulation again. Nominated for the 2006 Mercury Prize, 'White Bread Black Beer' was Green Gartside's acclaimed comeback, after Scritti's late 1970s art-punk beginnings, the synthpop glitz of their 80s heyday and the rap/ragga-infused experiments of the 90s.

Described by Gartside as "me playing around in the back room", this album is so much more than that humble statement suggests. A beguilingly sparse and homespun fusion that plays to his obvious strengths, it just oozes style – sophisti-pop confessionals full of typically verbose but intricate wordplay ("A Zigaboo kick, a Jimmy Chank lick / Well, that's the beat of my heart"), with Gartside's gentle croon sounding deliciously sweet and intimate.

The songs sparkle at every turn. Breathless ballad 'The Boom Boom Bap' depicts Gartside's love of rap, 'Dr Abernathy' is a jaunty confluence of late-era Beatles and XTC, and 'Mrs Hughes' comes straight from the Simon & Garfunkel copybook. What's not to love? **VI**



UNDER THE ISLAND

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Under The Island: A Compilation Of Experimental Music In Ireland 1960–1994

NYAHH

Ireland in the 1970s and 80s – a showband-dominated backwater, remote from the electronic cutting edge? Not so, it seems. The first of several jaw-dropping moments on this new comp is Roger Doyle's 'Tape Piece One'. Recorded in his bedroom in 1971 with nothing more than a tape machine, record player and mic, it's a 'Revolution 9'-style collage featuring snatches of Grieg's 'Peer Gynt', 'Greensleeves', radio news reports and even The Beatles themselves. Lennon would have adored it.

Even more lo-fi is 'Lake Waters Of Sorrow', on which Nigel Rolfe conjures otherworldly magic out of a bodhran filled with milk and sundry tape loops. Meanwhile, Danny McCarthy's 'Music For An Electric Hurling Stick' is exactly that – a piece performed on said sporting implement, fitted with strings and a pickup.

The technology improves as the compilation progresses, but the creative bar remains high. John Carson and Conor Kelly's inventive 'Evening Echoes' is based around samples of newspaper vendors. Like everything on this compilation, it shows that far from Düsseldorf, Sheffield and London, extraordinary electronic art was being created using next to nothing at all. **WS**

X MARKS THE PEDWALK

Superstition

MESHWORK MUSIC

On their 12th album in a career that spans four decades, X Marks The Pedwalk (German duo Sevren Ni-Arb and Estefania) are not aiming to reinvent the wheel. But while they remain rooted in the original synthpop of the 1980s, with Soft Cell and The Human League's stripped-down approach clearly an influence, the pair have got the knack for writing a memorable tune down to a fine art.

"An immersive exploration of deepest desires and feelings," the press release claims, promising heaps of "despair and mortality". But while both the lyrics and music of the likes of 'Frozen Eyes' do have an undeniably icy edge, the Kraftwerk-esque backing and snazzy, shiny production make it more fun than this account of 'Superstition' suggests.

So, while it's perhaps more likely you'll be haunted by the earworm melodies lingering in your brain than the lyrics of the Depeche Mode-ish 'Ghost On A Tray', you'll still be glad you visited the spot that X Marks. **BW**

MORITZ VON OSWALD

Silencio

TRESOR

Inspired by the ensemble work of Edgard Varèse, György Ligeti and Iannis Xenakis, this fascinating new album by German producer and Basic Channel co-founder Moritz Von Oswald cogently merges human voices with artificial sounds. Exploring the tension, harmony and nuance between man and machine across 11 tripped-out tracks, 'Silencio' really delivers.

The collective chants of the Vocalconsort Berlin choir are duly recorded, processed and manipulated by Von Oswald into cavernous, ghostly, and unsettling radiophonic hallucinations that sound like they're being transmitted from another dimension, as unearthly analogue pulses and nebulous textures descend, engulfing us in their hypnotic repetition.

'Luminoso' feels like a sludgier, more droney take on 'Koyaanisqatsi', Philip Glass' minimalist cornerstone. 'Volta' deconstructs Carl Orff's classic 'O Fortuna' into slasher flick territory, building to a big jumpscare that never actually happens. And the detuned polyphonic wails of 'Opaco' up the spectral quota into frankly terrifying but spine-tingling realms. Intensely complex and alluringly strange, this is astonishing stuff that demands close listening. Senses, reeling. **VI**

SIGN LIBRA

Hidden Beauty

RVNG INTL

Sublime electronics from Latvian producer

When you've got David Attenborough, Google Earth or even a Windows screensaver to watch, it's easy to connect with nature without risking sunburn, braving mosquitoes or having to use leaves as bog roll. Similarly, musicians tuning into the rhythms of the planet aren't always just playing bongos or recording birdsong in the backwoods.

From early new age artists like Iasos through to 1990s ambient albums such as The Future Sound Of London's 'Lifeforms' and even Deep Forest, electronic music has long tried to recreate exotic environments. Recently though, a number of albums inspired by nature have emphasised the music's very artificiality, rather than hiding it behind samples of traditional instruments to try to achieve a spurious mimesis. Think of the open-source computer script Matthewdavid used for his 'Mycellium Music' album, or the plastic psychedelia of Holly Waxwing's 'The New Pastoral' this year alone.

Sure, this might have something to do with a pandemic keeping everyone confined at home – these were the very conditions under which Agata Melnikova recorded her third Sign Libra album, 'Hidden Beauty'. But the Latvian artist had already begun exploring the rainforests through her laptop on 2018's 'Closer To The Equator', before taking off for a suite of music named after lunar craters on 2020's 'Sea To Sea'.

Now returning to Earth for what she calls an "intimate voyage through feminine nature", the only "natural" element on 'Hidden Beauty' is her own voice, which is tweaked and twisted in Ableton alongside all the other software-based sounds.

The efflorescent melodies and effervescent sonics make moments like 'Amber' teem with the life and colour of a coral reef – and indeed Melnikova is donating some of the profits from the album to the Coral Guardian NGO. The apparent submarine theme is conveyed both in track titles such as 'Aqua' and 'Coco De Mer', and also the large stretches of it that feel like you're in a bathysphere with Enya.

As the product of a hyperactive imagination plugged into a computer, this is a hyperreal environment you can encounter without getting off the sofa. 'Hidden Beauty' is a gorgeous, and rather accurate, representation of many contemporary relationships with the world around us.

PAUL CLARKE

Shop Talk

Agata Melnikova, aka Sign Libra, guides us through her record collection

Hi Agata! Where are your favourite record stores?

"When I am in Paris, I always check Babaluma and Dizonord. Both offer a pretty diverse music collection that is close to my taste. The last time I was there, I was in a particular mood and was guided by cover artworks, picturing feminine nature.

"From Babaluma I found a re-release of a beautiful Sunstroke album 'Nothing's Wrong In Paradise' and Beckie Bell's seven-inch single 'Love At First Sight', which I'd never heard before. I liked the instrumental version of it. In Dizonord I asked for some early Mylène Farmer, and they offered me 'Tristana' – a seven-inch with 'Au Bout De La Nuit' on the B-side. I was quite happy with how these purchases looked together."

How do you discover new music?

"Mostly by surfing on YouTube, Discogs and listening to online radio stations. I also discover some good stuff that speaks to me via the posts on Instagram accounts I follow – record stores, labels and so on. I rarely find out about new music when I am in a record store, but if I do, it gives me a special feeling!".

Have you ever purchased a record based on the cover art alone?

"One day in the mid-90s, my dad and I walked into a record store in Riga, and a particular cassette caught my eye. The artwork depicted a blurry portrait of a person and a red symbol, consisting of a triangle and spiral on a shiny, bronze-coloured background. I don't know what it was about this cover appealed to me, but I pointed it out to my father and he gave it a listen.

"That was 'The Trilogy', a compilation album by Andreas Vollenweider. Since this purchase, Vollenweider's music has become special to our family, and it also influenced my own music."

What's one rare album that you'd love to get your hands on?

"I feel relaxed about the idea of finding a rare physical record, because I can find it on YouTube, for example. As I prefer to buy vinyl records in stores, I am more interested in where this or that particular album will find me – in which city, which country? I have no idea, and I like that feeling.

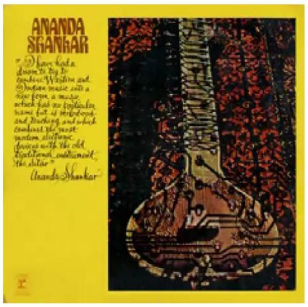
"Such special records include 'Heaven Or Las Vegas' by Cocteau Twins. Or owning a test pressing or autographed copy of a record from a musician I appreciate would be something rare to me."

Finally, tell us a bit about your record collection?

"I tend to keep my digital music collection within reasonable limits, as well as my slowly growing vinyl collection which, at the moment, lives on a 60cm shelf. Most of the records in different genres I own are from Paris, plus some proggy stuff I found in Riga and several nice albums I bought in different foreign cities.

"There is also a place for a couple of records that were gifts, and my own albums. Besides that, I have cassettes taken from my parents and a few CDs, but I need to update my sound system to play them!"

Buried Treasure



ANANDA SHANKAR

Ananda Shankar

REPRISE, 1970

In Ananda Shankar's relatively short lifetime, the Indian sitar player was never afraid to push boundaries. He jammed with Jimi Hendrix in the late 60s and made a sitar-based hip hop record with State Of Bengal in the late 90s, shortly before suffering a fatal heart attack at the age of 56. Back in 1970, when raga rock was at its peak, he fused sitars with Moog synthesisers on his eponymous debut album, which is renowned largely thanks to his mind-blowing version of 'Jumpin' Jack Flash'.

The sleeve notes of 'Ananda Shankar' describe its creator as "a young man with a sitar and a dream" whose name "means peace and joy". The album has become a word-of-mouth cult classic, and I first heard about it during an interview with the French musician David Sztanke, aka Tahiti Boy. I headed straight off in the direction of Discogs when our call was over, where I discovered that you can pick up a reasonable Reprise 1972 edition for £20, if you're lucky enough.

Shankar assembled his own wrecking crew with LA musicians including Elvis' bass player, Jerry Scheff. Hendrix was originally supposed to be on board, though such a domineering virtuoso would surely have upset the delicate equilibrium that's achieved here between sitar and Moog.

The synth was played by Paul Lewison, a musician and sound engineer whose claim to fame was mixing The Beach Boys. Shankar had his own big connections too. The son of dancers Amala and Uday Shankar, he was also the nephew of a certain Ravi, though he apparently learned to play the sitar with Lalmani Misra.

As well as 'Jumpin' Jack Flash', there's a kitsch bossa fusion version of 'Light My Fire' which takes the José Feliciano version of The Doors' classic and renders it three times more cosmic. But the real treasure is to be found in the Shankar/Lewison compositions. 'Sagar (The Ocean)' is a 13-minute meditation on the wonders of nature, while 'Metamorphosis' is perhaps the finest fusion of instruments from East and West, increasing trance-like with your own heartbeat as you listen.

The closing track, 'Raghupati' – the only piece with vocals – is a pan-religious arrangement of a traditional folk song with synth drones and spidery drum fills. Ananda Shankar, the young man with the sitar and a dream, did something remarkable by making music that will outlast us all.

JEREMY ALLEN

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Mehmet Aslan Presents Senza Decoro: Liebe & Anarchia In Switzerland 1980–1990

STRUT

Rebellious sounds from Swiss underground

"Nothing good comes from Switzerland except cuckoo clocks and Toblerone," Billy Connolly once complained (give or take an expletive or two), with the further observation, "It's impossible to eat a Toblerone without hurting yourself."

When he was performing that routine in the early 1990s, the famous comedian had almost certainly missed the exemplary underground Swiss alternative music that had been resounding from basements throughout the previous decade. Though, in fairness, so had the rest of us.

Swiss-Turkish DJ and musician Mehmet Aslan is on hand to partially rectify that collective mistake. His career highlights so far include a memorable reworking of Karpov Not Kasparov's 2014 club hit 'Mechanical Turk' and last year's excellent 'The Sun Is Parallel', a debut album of beautifully crafted digital patchwork psychedelia. On 'Senza Decoro', Aslan turns curator, taking us on a fascinating journey to discover a trove of violently jagged alternative pop oddities from a country famed for its perpetual neutrality.

To suggest there was any kind of scene at that time would be specious. Instead, we get an album of musical polygamy sung in four different languages by a disparate bunch of malcontents. As Aslan explains, "The rise of DIY synth music coincided with the political thrust of the youth movement in Switzerland which turned cities… upside down with violent rioting – a lot of it, ultimately in the name of art, happening as a cultural revolution".

Swiss post-punks LiLiPUT are perhaps the only group likely to be known outside of Switzerland beyond the hyper-observant. Their buoyant, bassy 'Boat-Song' floats amiably by, while UnknownmiX's 'Nightmare' is a more intensely polyrhythmic foray into the realm of strange dreams. Café Türk brings some gratifying Anatolian reggae on the far too swift 'Söyledir', and Aslan himself steps in to bolster tracks by El Deux and KonX with a pair of well-worked edits.

Saving what surely qualifes as the most unusual until last, we encounter 'L'Ombre Dorée Du Scarabée Bleu' (or 'The Golden Shadow Of The Blue Beetle') by the Swiss jazz pianist Christine Schaller. It sounds as though it was played and multitracked with a Fairlight CMI and a glockenspiel, a Dadaist melange of electronic thrills, operatic hollering and racy dexterity. Try dancing along to it if you dare, but definitely not while getting stuck into a Toblerone.

JEREMY ALLEN

RAINY MILLER & SPACE AFRIKA – PHOTO: FRANKIE CASILLO

RAINY MILLER & SPACE AFRIKA

A Grisaille Wedding

FIXED ABODE

A musical marriage made in heaven, 'A Grisaille Wedding' is the first full-length collaboration between Manchester's Rainy Miller and Space Afrika. Both have made two of the most essential albums of recent years – 'Desquamation (Fire, Burn. Nobody)' and 'Honest Labour', respectively – though neither was exactly packed with wedding disco bangers. True to form, 'A Grisaille Wedding' more closely resembles a funeral, as suggested by both the titles and elegiac ambience of 'The Graves At Charleroi' and 'Let It Die'.

There are some obvious touchstones – such as Burial's haunted soundscapes and the gnawing unease of Massive Attack's 'Mezzanine' – but Rainy Miller and Space Afrika grafitti them with their own sonic signatures. Miller's introspective poetry is delivered through autotuned vocals that turn an R&B cliche into a wounded whimper, while the Space Afrika duo expand their dub techno palette with more guitars on the likes of '1-2-1'. Despite the project's collaborative conception and guests including Mica Levi and Iceboy Violet, it's a very solitary-sounding record, not least because it's truly one of a kind. **PC**

MINT FIELD

Aprender A Ser

FELTE

This intoxicating work of psychedelic dreampop emanates from Mexico City trio Mint Field, who are guitarist and vocalist Estrella Del Sol and bassist Sebastian Neyra, alongside collaborator and Ulrika Spacek drummer Callum Brown. This is their fourth long-player and, true to the form that began with their outstanding 2018 debut 'Pasar De Las Luces', it inhabits a distinctive night-shaded space populated by the likes of Beach House, My Bloody Valentine and Slowdive.

The floating sigh of Del Sol's exquisitely ethereal vocals, combined with her shimmering, filigree minor key guitar renders everything here in a shrouded, seductive melancholy. Hypnotic tracks like 'El Suspiro Cambia Todo' elicit a deep, emotive reaction, capturing a fleeting, small-hours pensiveness that dissipates as it drifts up to the stars. Elsewhere, the equally immersive 'Respiro Profundo' carries a lugubrious sheen that channels something of Broadcast's crepuscular allure, but then adds driving bass and controlled guitar fuzz to propel itself out into some moonlit desert expanse. Superb. **CG**

LOL TOLHURST X BUDGIE X JACKNIFE LEE

Los Angeles

PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

Ageing goths never die, they just fade to grey, so the saying goes. But Lol Tolhurst (ex-Cure) and Budgie (ex-Banshees) resist the temptation to idly retread former glories by roping in super-producer Garret "Jacknife" Lee to this unlikely alt-supergroup. It's a canny move. With Lee expertly twiddling the knobs, deploying synths, percussion and essential scuzz/stardust as he goes, 'Los Angeles' flaunts its warped, punk-funk chops with real verve and swagger, helped along by a starry supporting cast.

On the propulsive glam-stomp of the title cut, LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy barks out acerbic epithets that allude to the city's underbelly ("Los Angeles eats its children"), while the three Bobby Gillespie-fronted tracks are deliciously woozy, and easily the best thing the Primal Scream singer's done for years. The standout, though, is 'We Got To Move', featuring Modest Mouse's Isaac Brock on vox, which is fit to burst with throbbing motorik groove and clatter. Glorious, all of it. Tolhurst and Budgie might be getting on a bit, but with live dates also in the pipeline, there's clearly plenty of life left in these old bones. **VI**

SALAMANDA

SALAMANDA

In Parallel

WISDOM TEETH

Salamanda's recent single 'Homemade Jam' made it seem like the duo – Seoul's Uman Therma and Yetsuby – are now making a kind of K-pop, and we don't mean the glossy type from their homeland. The helium vocal loops and rubbery rhythms sound like catnip for ears in a tranquilised, dissociative state, and Salamanda have certainly picked up fans from clubland chill-out rooms recently, following their last album 'Ashbalkum'.

But the party that 'In Parallel' soundtracks is something much more innocent than a post-club after-hours. The twinkling melodies and simmering electronics of 'Purple Punch' and 'Sun Tickles' conjure cute stop-motion puppets dancing in a Kankyō Ongaku environment made of colourful string and cardboard. It's a world Salamanda have been stitching together since their 2019 'Our Lair' single, and yet, while the pair have never really grown up, nor does their music ever get old. **PC**

JEAN-MICHEL JARRE

OXYMOREWORKS

SONY MUSIC

Jean-Michel Jarre has never been one to rest on his laurels. Therefore, last year's immense, immersive 'Oxymore' album – his best in decades – returns bearing more fruit, with a well-chosen band of musicians familiar and new. Jarre is a natural collaborator these days, both on his pair of 'Electronica' albums from the middle of the last decade, and on 'Oxymore', itself a collaboration from beyond the grave with the legendary musique concrète pioneer Pierre Henry.

On 'OXYMOREWORKS', Henry's voice appears again on two tracks towards the conclusion, one with artist NSDOS and one with Irène Drésel, providing a thread of continuity to the original masterwork. The unique digital timbre is also carried over with the same titles attributed to the reimagined tracks, though where the guest artists take those originals is invariably some place fresh and unexpected. The headline artists, Brian Eno and Martin Gore, are pushed up front on the track listing, the latter faring best with a playfully ebullient take on 'Brutalism'. Perhaps most satisfying of all is French 79's wonderfully warped 'Epica', though newcomer Adiescar Chase's 'Synthy Sisters' runs it close. **JA**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Rental Yields: Volume Five

FRONT & FOLLOW

When Front & Follow's Justin Watson was preparing the fourth volume of 'Rental Yields', I asked him to explain the concept. He sent me a PowerPoint slide. "Each artist creates a NEW piece using the audio stolen from someone else in the group," the slide said. "They steal (borrow) from one other person (their TENANT), and another different person will borrow from them (their LANDLORD)." It's a poignant observtaion on housing inequality in Manchester, and proceeds from each volume in the series go to poverty and homelessness charity SPIN.

The final part, 'Rental Yields: Volume Five', features another high quality portfolio of inhabitants. The vibe feels a little darker here, with Quartersized and Von Heuser's 'The Root Cause Is Lost Again' offering a snarling noir, and 'Ahead In' by Starlings and Stereo Minus One evoking a grubby early Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center tape loop experiment. Xqui and Elizabeth Joan Kelly's 'Call My Number' hitches Kelly's delicate vocal to Xqui's symphonic ambience, closing the consistently brilliant 'Rental Yields' concept on a sweet and emotive note. **MS**

VIC MARS

The Beacons

CLAY PIPE

Moog-laced journey through rugged terrain

It's *the moment*. Those who frequently walk alone in wild places will recognise it. The chilling turning point when an amiable afternoon ramble – all flapjacks and 'The Happy Wanderer' – is suddenly subsumed by nebulous disquiet. Storm clouds gather, casting ominous shadows on already forbidding hillsides. Birdsong is silenced, the wind murmurs through the branches of skeletal sycamores, and there's a decomposing sheep at the foot of a joyless cairn.

Without a whisper of warning, you're acutely aware of being uncomfortably alone. 'The Beacons', Vic Mars' third album for Clay Pipe, captures "the moment" perfectly.

Previously, Mars has channelled the gentle calm of his native Herefordshire into elegantly pastoral albums, indebted equally to Ralph Vaughan Williams and the music box from 'Camberwick Green'. But 'The Beacons' crosses the border, belonging firmly to the unforgiving landscapes of the Welsh mountains. The foghorn rumble of a windswept Moog lures us onto the frost-flecked slopes of 'Picws Du', before a waltzing melodeon stumbles breathlessly across the deserted plateau of 'Foel Fraith'.

There's dark social history here. The wistful synths of 'The Obelisk' circle mournfully above the spot where missing infant Tommy Jones was found dead in August 1900. And there are two paeans to wartime plane crashes. The plaintive piano of 'Memorial Cairn' commemorates the 1942 loss of a Wellington bomber at the summit of Waun Rydd. And 'MF 509'? Another doomed aircraft whose night-flying exercises ended in tragedy on Carreg Goch in November 1944, with the loss of all six Canadian crewmen. Stuttering synths, the ping of radar and a swell of elegiac ambience marks their passing.

There are lighter tones, though. 'Cwm Llwch' is a shimmering dance across the surface of this modest lake, where – local legend has it – an idyllic, invisible island populated by fairies was once accessible from a secret door at the water's edge. Mars weaves softly strummed guitars around humming drones to lure the fey folk from their hidden paradise.

And there is, of course, a triumphant ending. The climactic strings of 'Ystradfellte' are a bone-thawing whisky in this isolated Powys village, and "the moment" suddenly feels like a folly, an indulgent surrender to barely-there danger. It'll be back, though. It *always* comes back.

BOB FISCHER

Label Profile

qd

Label: Quiet Details
Location: UK
Est: 2023

Potted History: "The label was conceived sometime in 2022," explains founder Al Gold. "I'd been making music as Fields We Found for a while, and became friends with some wonderful artists. A lot had changed in my life and the idea for the label was evolving, so it seemed the perfect time to do it.

"Everyone I asked to contribute was incredibly supportive and encouraging, so I started planning all the other elements with the aim of having something as fully formed as possible from the first release."

Mission Statement: "The label is based on musicians I love and their interpretation of the phrase 'quiet details'. There's no other creative input from me, just total trust in them to take it where they feel. The albums are presented in two ways – single tracks for the digital version and a continuous mix for the physical, which is most often on CD. I love long-form listening and feel it does the artists' work the most justice. A single piece allows the listener to focus and be immersed entirely in the music for the duration.

"Collaboration and visual art is a fundamental part of what we do. The artist and I decide on colours or images that suit the feel of the album, and from there I make the final artwork using a combination of paper-making, image reproduction, mixed-media collage, analogue photography and minimal digital editing. I do this while listening to the album with the aim of creating a piece that is a direct representation of the music."

Key Artists & Releases: "It's hard to pick highlights as I'm so grateful to all the artists that have put their trust in QD. Their talent is what makes the label what it is. I'd urge anyone who likes our releases to dig into their other work, there's a huge amount of stunning music to discover.

"QD01 was special. Craig Tattersall has become a good friend over the past few years and I adore his work, so having him first felt very fitting. He encapsulates the QD concept perfectly, so I'm equally happy to have him as the first person to appear twice, with our most recent release QD09, collaborating with another dear friend, Ian Hawgood, as Observatories. They're both massive inspirations so it's an honour to put their music out."

Future Plans: "Continuing to connect with more artists who I think will do interesting takes on the label idea, regardless of genre. There are so many out there doing next-level stuff and I'm excited to see how they explore it."

Any Other Business? "I love running the label and it's a perfect partner to my work as a mastering engineer. We've already got amazing people coming up with albums I'm very excited to share. As a music fan first, I just feel very lucky to be involved with musicians doing such beautiful things."

For more, visit quietdetails.bandcamp.com

First And Last And Always

Kingston University Stylophone Orchestra's **Leah Kardos** on the first and last albums she bought, and an all-time favourite

FIRST

VANGELIS

See You Later

POLYDOR, 1980

"This is not the first album I ever bought – that was Billy Ocean's 'Greatest Hits', which I purchased with my pocket money in 1989 – but I have so much love today for this bleak, proggy, slightly jazzy, criminally underrated Vangelis album. I remember it being played at home when I was a kid, and being completely spooked by it. 'Suffocation' is terrifying and brilliant, and the full-length, cleaner-sounding 'Memories Of Green', predating the 'Blade Runner' OST, is a perfect gem."

LAST

BLEVIN BLECTUM

OMNII

DEATHBOMB ARC, 2023

"I was completely charmed by this latest release from the experimental electronic artist Blevin Blectum – who is Bevin Kelley, one half of the experimental duo Blectum From Blechdom. It's a wide-eyed trip through weird and wonderful retro-futuristic galaxy-scapes. It's got something of the earnestness of late 1970s Vangelis, the awed scope of Carl Sagan's 'Cosmos' and a dash of the alluring naffness of Ron Jones' early soundtracking for 'Star Trek: The Next Generation'. An absolute winner."

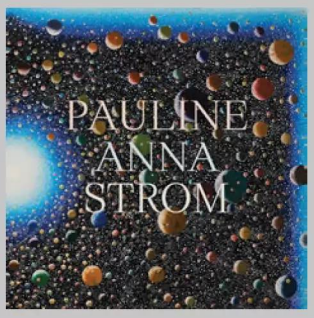
ALWAYS

BJÖRK

Biophilia

ONE LITTLE INDIAN, 2011

"For me, it's the most ambitious, generous and loving Björk record. The sound of an artist reaching out to the edges of the universe and into the microscopic matter of being, to encompass and articulate the poetry of existence. I remember when I first heard 'Crystalline'. I was walking to work, and as the breakbeats kicked in I had to stop and lean against someone's front fence until it was done. It was so visceral and amazing, it was like my body couldn't take it."



PAULINE ANNA STROM

Echoes, Spaces, Lines

RVNG INTL

Boxset celebrates West Coast synthesist

The 21st century reissue culture has created a new sort of musical icon, and the late Pauline Anna Strom is surely one of them. The 1980s home recording boom enabled singular artists to create and distribute music in a vacuum – reliably obscure at the point of release, but later obsessed over by devotees forever thirsting for the next surprise archival find.

'Echoes, Spaces, Lines' gathers together fully remastered editions of Strom's first three albums, as well as the previously unreleased 'Oceans Of Tears'. Across the three works from 1982 to 1984, heightened spirituality pours out of every synth sequence, transcending ambient platitudes to reach more nuanced zones of enlightenment.

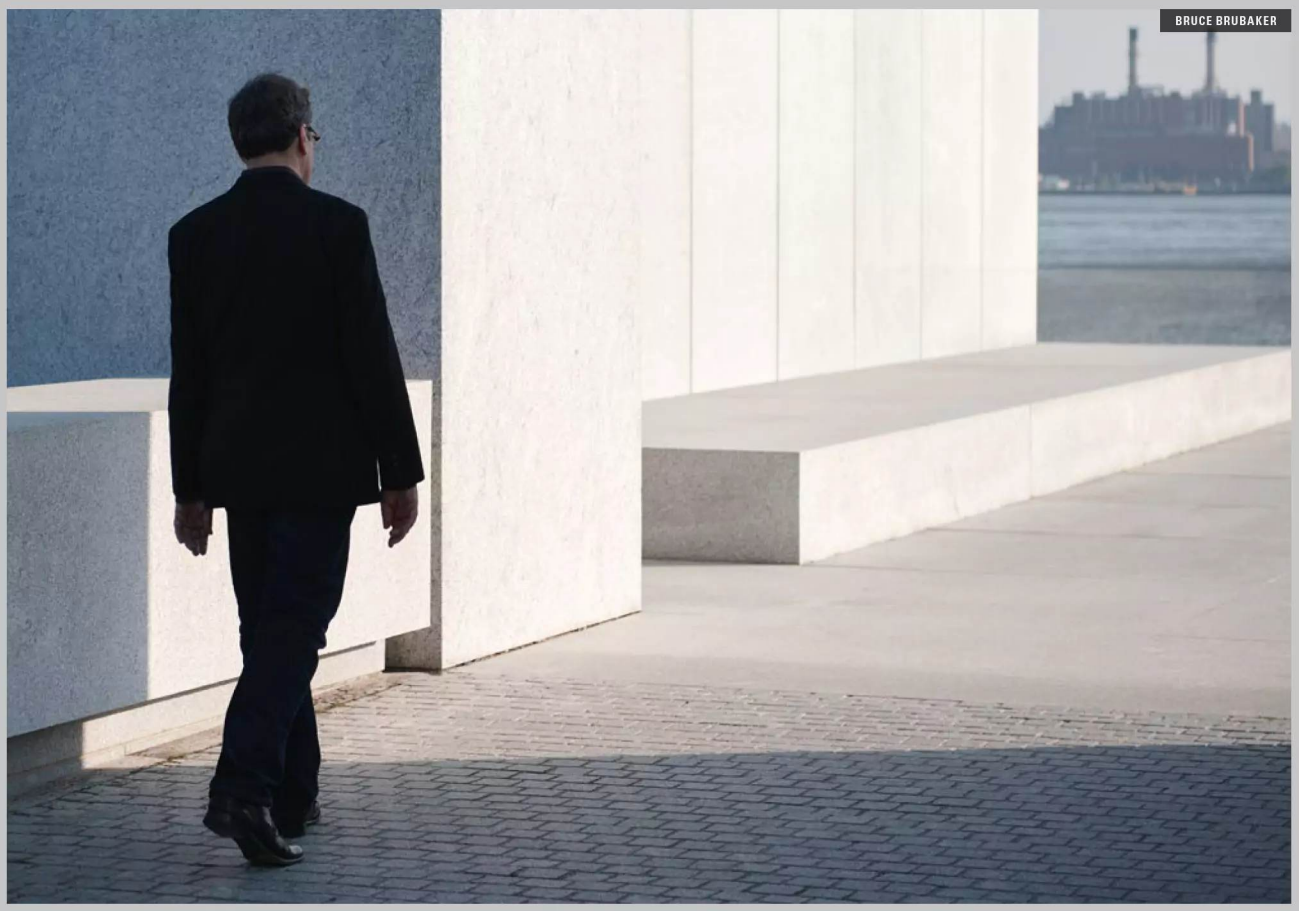
In Strom's hands, the unmistakable pulse of a TR-808 on 'The Unveiling' sheds its usual heftiness to become a light, uplifting vehicle for shimmering textural work and probing, inquisitive melodic passages. 'Symphonic Industry' plunges into mysterious, furtive sweeps of ARPs and pads that build up vibrant, visual worlds – a pointed side-effect given that Strom was blind.

It's hard to escape the connection between her own Bay Area synth music and the new age scene, but it's also worth noting that the staunchly independent Strom rejected the genre and any connection to it. You need only to listen to a piece like 'Century C', where undeniably beautiful melodic forms flirt with distinctly tweaked, oscillating frequencies, for an end result much bolder than new age's typical pleasantries.

RVNG Intl have taken on documenting Strom's work as a personal, intimate endeavour, previously compiling 2017's 'Trans-Millenia Music' and helping initiate an album of new music, 'Angel Tears In Sunlight', shortly before she passed away in 2020. In the wake of her death, a friend found an unreleased album from the same early 80s era among the vast reams of recorded material in her home.

Compared to all the other tapes, 'Oceans Of Tears' was fully titled and sequenced, seemingly prepared to enter the wider world. From the swooning melancholy of 'Summer Rain' to the spectral, spatial sound sculpture of 'Timeless Grief', it's the perfect addition to this latest chapter in Strom's half-hidden legacy, one so faithfully captured across this boxset.

OLI WARWICK


BRUCE BRUBAKER

BRUCE BRUBAKER
Eno Piano
INFINÉ

Bruce Brubaker's 'Glass Piano' (2015) established the American pianist as a formidable interpreter. That suite was heralded as the definitive study of Philip Glass' keyboard works, and his résumé also includes innovative, expert performances of pieces by Terry Riley and John Cage. For 'Eno Piano' he turns his talented hands to the work of Brian Eno and, like a method actor immersing himself in a role, preparations included consulting a deck of 'Oblique Strategy' cards for guidance.

The tracks from 'Ambient 1 (Music For Airports)' aren't simply covers of Robert Wyatt's piano motifs. Long, organ-like tones circle around Brubaker's Steinway. These are formed by the use of electromagnetic devices interacting with the piano strings, creating the impression of acoustic and electronic music simultaneously. His versions of 'By This River' from 'Before And After Science' occupy the mesmerising heart of this album. Here, Eno's melodic ruminations are surrounded by plaintive drones, its highest notes subjected to rich and enveloping reverb. Outstanding. **MS**

KINGSTON UNIVERSITY STYLOPHONE ORCHESTRA
Live To Tape At Visconti Studio
SPUN OUT OF CONTROL

"The idea behind the orchestra is just to play cheap, battery-powered synthesisers together." That's the modest announcement from founder Leah Kardos at the outset of this as-live covers collection, but she's selling the project short. 'Who Gives A Thought' turns Brian Eno's recent album-opener into a thrilling buzz of massed stylophones, pierced by the soaring vocals of Kardos and long-term orchestra member Zuzanna Wężyk. And their take on 'Are "Friends" Electric?', complete with Yarwood-esque Numan take-off from Athos Kyriacou, is genuinely grin-inducing.

Really, it should be throwaway fun. But, as with the 2022 debut 'Stylophonika', there are unexpected depths. Kardos is a respected authority on David Bowie and an accomplished solo artist, effortlessly combining academic rigour with irreverent affection. It's an approach epitomised by the orchestra's timely take on the theme from 'Doctor Who', where the evocative noise of the quintessential 1970s toy instrument collides perfectly with the ultimate example of teatime telly weirdness. Like all our childhood Christmases come at once. **BF**

MATMOS
Return To Archive
SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

When you think of the Smithsonian Folkways label, you probably think of Appalachian murder ballads or paeans to the old American West. What it's less likely to summon is a frenzied plunderphonic gazette of everyday clatter – the bark of a dog, that snaps into the whistle of a train, then zooms into the buzz of a telephone. However, on 'Good Morning Electronics', the opening track of 'Return To Archive', that's exactly what you get.

Matmos are the American musicians Drew Daniel and Martin Schmidt, and this album is a literal return to the archives. Alongside more traditional folk songs, Smithsonian also hold recordings of more quotidian sounds, and it's from these that the duo have constructed the nine pieces here. The feel throughout is superbly unhinged, twisting the quick-fire garble of the opener into incrementally stranger places, before closing with the standout, 'Going To Sleep'. Here, relaxation-tape dialogue is intercut with a particularly curious bout of exploding head syndrome, where a figmentary slammed door is replaced by what sounds like a supertanker crashing into your gable end. **ST**

MARINA HERLOP

MARINA HERLOP
Nekkuja
PAN

The latest release from Catalan vocalist, pianist and composer Marina Herlop follows on from her acclaimed 2022 album 'Pripyat', but it musically faces a different, brighter horizon. 'Nekkuja' is Herlop's self-described garden of creativity, a joyful exploration of finding an "inner light" – and the onset of the opener, 'Busa', certainly lights up the happy centres of the brain.

Blending dashes of free jazz fantasy with a flourishing touch of funk, the lofty spiritual with a spritz of experimental electronica, 'Nekkuja' is a radiant celebration of optimism. Harp and other plucked strings harmonise with piano and a choir of Herlop's lucent vocals, layered into a precisely curated and magnificent tonal garden.

It's contemporary and avant-garde in form and arrangement, and Herlop's musical skill shines all the brighter thanks to the virtuoso performances of guest musicians Òscar Garrobé, who adds jazzy overtones to the jubilant highlight 'Cosset', and Adri González who provides additional synth work throughout. An outstanding feat of independent musical thought. **FH**

DJ SHADOW
Action Adventure
MASS APPEAL

Bay Area sample alchemist DJ Shadow has, in a sense, returned to his roots with 'Action Adventure'. With a catalogue stretching over 30 years, Josh Davis' work has touched on everything from hip hop to drum 'n' bass and electronica. His beginnings though were in intricate bricolages of sound from his vast record collection, exemplified by his 1996 opus 'Endtroducing.....'.

During the pandemic lockdowns he sought comfort in nostalgia, and when a friend alerted him to a hoard of Baltimore radio tapes from the 80s available on eBay, he snapped them up, reminded of the old radio mixes he was raised on.

'Action Adventure' taps into this treasure trove, mixing samples, original beats and electronics in surprising ways. Directly inspired by the 80s soul he heard on the cassettes, 'You Played Me' is an electro-funk joy, while 'She's Evolving' has the bittersweet feel of all the best synthpop. Blending familiarity with fresh influences, this album is on a par with Shadow's best work. **BM**

WOODLEIGH RESEARCH FACILITY
Phonox Nights
FACILITY 4 / !K7

'Phonox Nights' contains Andrew Weatherall's last recorded statement, 'Gates To The South', created before his untimely passing in February 2020. 'Gates' has everything you'd expect from classic 4am downtempo Weatherall – it's an enthralling exercise in analogue-sounding, edgy minimalism. But, of course, it's also loaded with poignancy. It's representative of the feel of much of this acid-drenched collection by Woodleigh Research Facility, the outlet for the 30-year-long creative partnership between Andrew Weatherall and Nina Walsh.

Perhaps the peak of this sound is 'One Part Disco', which possesses all the twinkling glamour of a bpm-deprived 'Fade To Grey'. Melancholy, yes, but fizzing with hope. Elsewhere, rapturous acid takes the lead. The title track's ethereal chords (courtesy of Weatherall himself) frame a future club classic, while 'Wolves Don't Chase Hope (They Chase Rabbits)', comes on like 'Voodoo Ray' recast as incidental music for an imaginary TV show called 'Rave Cops'. This record does a fine job of reflecting Weatherall's competing passions and is a testament to an extraordinary pioneer. **AT**

DEVO

Art Devo 1973–1977

FUTURISMO

Raw and rare early cuts

When Brian Eno talked about producing Devo at Conny Plank's studio in Cologne early in 1978, he described with exasperation the band regularly diving into a huge stash of cassettes, pulling out demos and demanding an accurate recreation of the lo-fi sounds they'd cooked up back in the rubber-manufacturing city of Akron over the previous five years. This boxset is part of that stash, and it's not for the weak-kneed.

This is primal Devo, spread across four discs (three albums and a seven-inch), recorded at rough studios and even rougher gigs in the bleak Rust Belt of north-east Ohio. It's full of dark humour, rage and decidedly unwoke lyrics. Devo take on the stalled counterculture revolution of the late 1960s and compact it into a vicious satire of American society – its puritanism and sexual depravity, its cheerful consumerism and love of violence.

'Booji's Industrial Death' sets the tone. A menacing, splurting synth soundscape, it was created for a film Devo made of their mascot, Booji Boy, getting his head squished in a drop forge. There's a 1974 live version of 'Midget', a deeply questionable track that has only seen the light of day on the 'Hardcore' compilations and subtitled here as 'My Lai Mama'. It evidences the tension of early Devo gigs. Some shouts of "Fuck you!" are followed by Jerry Casale saying over the mic, "He said it was Nazi music! I'm glad he's going! He's a Nazi!".

'Dixie' showcases their pre-punk desire to be a post-punk Rolling Stones, with its inversion of 'Brown Sugar' and blues sex lyrics ("I was down in Georgia / Sucking on a peach"), which makes sense of their later triumphant takedown, '(I Can't Get Me No) Satisfaction'.

Across the collection, you can hear the gradual cell division of Devo, from the sperm of Jerry Casale's mutated garage blues and the egg of Mark Mothersbaugh's pop psychedelic electronics, as on 'U Got Me Bugged' and 'Huboon Stomp'.

By disc three, Devo-proper is starting to emerge from the goo, with early versions of later fan favourites like 'Shrivel Up', 'Smart Patrol', 'Secret Agent Man', 'Social Fools', 'Space Junk' and 'Race Of Doom'. Devo's lengthy gestation is easily as much fun as their fine brace of major-label albums, and this one comes with the added attraction of a scratch and sniff card that stinks of burning rubber.

MARK ROLAND

VINCE CLARKE

Songs Of Silence

MUTE

Synthpop giant's debut solo album

In October 2019, following Erasure's performance of John Cage's '4'33"' for Mute's lavish 'STUMM433' boxset, I spoke to co-founder Vince Clarke about silence. Clarke talked about his favourite time of day being super-early in the morning.

"For the rest of my day, there's always sound," he told me. "I'm either in the studio, or there's something else going on in the house. I love the silence at that time of day. No one's about. It's just me and the cat."

Only a few short months later, we all experienced the deafening quiet of lockdown, which is where the pieces on 'Songs Of Silence' began. These 10 tracks are all characterised by the presence of drones. The fine modulations, dissonant textures and subtle overtones command complete attention, not superficial listening. The triumph of 'Songs Of Silence', however, is that it all still sounds like Vince Clarke.

'Red Planet' begins with a gentle pulse, out of which overlapping drones unfold. A breathy female voice ushers in a classic Clarke synth sequence that appears rapidly and disappears just as quickly into the distance. But it's a sense of melody – albeit atomised and stretched out into electro-symphonic ambience – that ties this to his wider body of work.

'Mitosis' occupies similar territory, offering spirals of beatific melodies and chiming sounds freighted with latent energy. It's as though it could evolve into one of Clarke's minimal techno forays, or an electronic rendition of a Philip Glass composition.

The sonic atmosphere of 'The Lamentations Of Jeremiah' is complemented by the haunting, devastating cello of Clarke's good friend Reed Hays, who alternates between plaintive sparseness and rapid arpeggios that bear comparison with some of Clarke's best basslines.

The closing track, 'Last Transmission', features crystalline overlapping textures, but it's a subtle synth bleep that reveals its creator, sounding like a distant broadcast from the tour that followed 1991's 'Chorus' album.

This is a work of heavy introspection and extreme vulnerability. And yet, for all its maudlin outlook, there is a trace of Clarke's wry humour in the title – few of these tracks could be actually described as songs and, like Cage's legendary composition, none of them are remotely silent. A profound and transcendent listening experience from start to finish.

MAT SMITH

REVIEWS BY
JEREMY ALLEN,
IMOGEN BEBB,
PAUL CLARKE,
BOB FISCHER,
CLAIRE FRANCIS,
CARL GRIFFIN,
FREDDIE HUDSON,
VELIMIR ILIC,
ISAAK LEWIS-SMITH,
BEN MURPHY,
MARK ROLAND,
WILL SIMPSON,
MAT SMITH,
ANTHONY THORNTON,
SPENSER TOMSON,
OLI WARWICK,
BEN WILLMOTT

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Musician **Vic Mars** takes on this month's quick-fire questions

INTERVIEW: NEIL MASON

Hello Vic, where are you right now and what can you see?
"I'm sitting in my living room, watching a squirrel outside attempting a bin-forage to the music of The Wooden O."

Your label describes you as an "enigmatic producer". Without wishing to burst the bubble, tell us something about yourself
"I was born and raised in Hereford, moved to London, then to Japan, and back to London. I have no idea where I will end up. Possibly a full circle."

Your new album comes with a gorgeous enamel badge. Wow, eh?
"Yeah, as you know, all the Clay Pipe artwork and design is by Frances Castle, the label owner. The cover artwork for the album and the badge look amazing. I'm not sure if the album and badge combination will continue with other releases, but I hope so."

Badges used to be such a big thing. What was pinned to your lapels growing up?
"I think I had a Chewits badge and a '#1 Tintin Reader' badge."

'The Beacon' is your third album for Clay Pipe. What keeps you loyal to the label?
"I make a lot of music and have released stuff on other labels, but most of it wouldn't suit Clay Pipe. I like the themes of the label, and they are all lovely people."

For this release, you've swapped pastoral Herefordshire for the dramatic Brecon Beacons as your inspiration. How come?
"The previous albums were about Herefordshire, but they were also about memories and childhood. The Brecon Beacons were part of my youth too – day trips with the family and later with friends, and when I visited more recently, I found the scenery really inspiring."

Wales is a mere jaunt down the road from where you grew up, but the landscapes couldn't be more different could they?
"That's true. But both are equally beautiful in my mind. It feels like the Black Mountains are always in the background in Hereford."

What impact do you think the Beacons had on you growing up? How do you think those experiences have helped shape the record?
"I have memories of jumping off waterfalls in Ystradfellte and clambering to reach the tops of the mountains throughout the summers of the 90s. Then, they were just days out, but looking back now I had amazing times there."

I love the idea that in winter the distant ice-capped peaks served as "a childhood barometer", a sign that where you lived might also be graced with snow?
"Every winter, it was important information at primary school. We hoped for snow and with it a possible school closure!"

It never ceases to amaze me just how dramatic the landscape is in Wales. How do you go about capturing that with instrumental music?
"I hadn't been to the Brecon Beacons for quite a long time, and I'd forgotten how vast they are and how they loom above you. When I went back a few years ago, I was thinking about what it might sound like. The Moog helped me get the sort of big droney-sounding stuff, and I used slowed-down recorders and melodicas to try to convey the landscape there. Hopefully it works."

The sonic palette is quite dark for you with the Moog to the fore. What's your Moog of choice?
"My Moog of choice would be something like a Moog One, but due to budget restraints, I went for a Moog Grandmother."

There's a dash of Sakamoto in tracks like 'Memorial Cairn' and 'The Obelisk'. Where do you think that comes from?
"I didn't notice that until now. I am a big fan of his work, particularly the earlier stuff like the 'B-2 Unit' LP. He has a lifetime of music, which needs exploring more."

You've also introduced some live drums on 'Pen Y Fan'. That'll probably surprise some people?
"It's not something I've done before on a release. I planned to have some energetic drums very early on, as I wanted the track to sound big. The drums on 'Pen Y Fan' were performed by Alex Thomas, an incredible drummer who has played with John Cale and Squarepusher. Luckily, he's a friend of my sister-in-law. Thanks Tina! The drumming on 'Ystradfellte' is by Shawn Nakano, an old friend from my time in Japan, who's also a great drummer. I'm really happy with how both drum parts turned out."

You pick up on some interesting stories for this album, chief among them the legend of Llyn Cwm Llwch lake. There's a mysterious door within the lake, said to open to an invisible island, right?
"So they say… but I think the door has permanently shut due to someone breaking the rules and stealing something from the other side. It's only a small lake, but it definitely has an atmosphere."

There's also an old woman of the lake who uses music to gain the attention of her victims. Not casting aspersions, but your music is quite alluring…
"Ha-ha! Thanks. That might make a good music video. Are they still called music videos?"

'The Beacons' is released by Clay Pipe on 17 November

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